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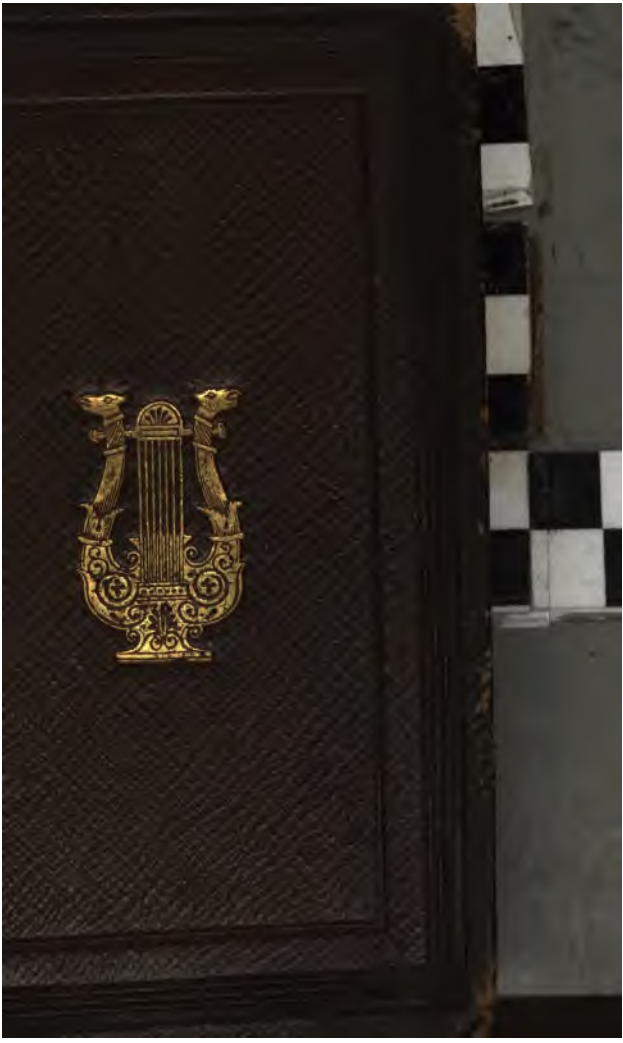
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THE

BRITISH ANTHOLOGY

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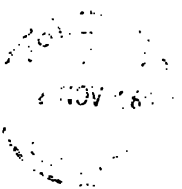
POETICAL LIBRARY.

VOL. I.

MILTON.
PARNELL.
DRYDEN.

LONDON:
PUBLISHED BY JOHN SHARPE,
DUKE STREET,
PICCADILLY.

1824.



ADVERTISEMENT.

THE design of this Work is to furnish the general reader with ready access to those richer Poems of *secondary length* which are at present found only or chiefly in the entire works of their respective authors. While editions of the leading Poems of Milton, Thomson, and Young have been multiplied with endless profusion, not only have the once favourite productions of Prior, Shenstone, and other authors sunk into comparative neglect, but even the name of Thomson has scarcely transmitted to the present generation the knowledge of 'The Castle of Indolence,' buried as it long has been in a mass of certainly inferior poetry. Collins and Gray, but more particularly Goldsmith, Beattie, and Burns, are indeed securely gliding down the stream of time—but the stately Dryden and the polished Pope have, till very lately, been laid aside. In connexion with the Choicest Productions of the more successful authors, it has been the object of this Work to do justice to those who have been neglected, by editions of their Principal Pieces, placing each of them in a prominent point of view,

yet adapting the whole to Chronological Arrangement. Of some authors there is but little omitted, of others very little (but that little of real excellence) selected. Larger portions are taken from Pope and Dryden; and although the plan of *an Anthology* could neither with convenience nor propriety include the Seasons, and the Shipwreck, the Task, and the Table Talk, &c. of Cowper, the Night Thoughts, or Paradise Lost, editions uniformly corresponding with the Anthology will shortly be supplied, so that the collection may then be had either of single or of double extent (for the respective portions will each form eight volumes) at the option of the purchaser. According to this plan every thing that can be desired is attainable: those persons who prefer the ANTHOLOGY alone can be accommodated; and those who wish the larger Poems to be added may have their wishes gratified in a complete POETICAL LIBRARY.

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MILTON.

COMUS,
SAMSON AGONISTES,
ETC.

MILTON.

COMUS.

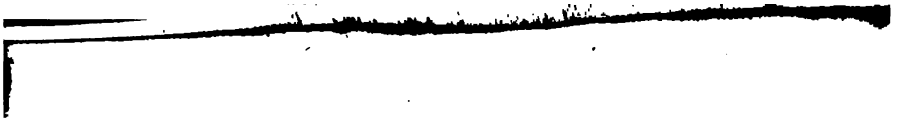
SAMSON AGONISTES.



Was I deceiv'd, or did a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night?

W. Greatbatch fc

PUBLISHED JAN.ry 1.st 1825, BY JOHN SHARPE, LONDON



[1] TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

JOHN LORD VISCOUNT BRACKLEY[2],

SON AND HEIR-APPARENT TO THE EARL OF BRIDGEWATER, ETC.

MY LORD,

THIS poem, which received its first occasion of birth from yourself and others of your noble family, and much honour from your own person in the performance, now returns again to make a final dedication of itself to you. Although not openly acknowledged by the author[3], yet it is a legitimate offspring, so lovely and so much desired, that the often copying of it hath tired my pen to give my several friends satisfaction, and brought me to a necessity of producing it to the public view; and now to offer it up in all rightful devotion to those fair hopes, and rare endowments of your much promising youth, which give a full assurance, to all that know you, of a future excellence. Live, sweet lord, to be the honour of your name, and receive this as your own, from the hands of him who hath by many favours been long obliged to your most honoured parents, and as in this representation your attendant Thyrsis, so now in all real expression

Your faithful and most humble servant,

H. LAWES.

[1] This is the dedication to Lawes's edition of the Mask, 1637.

[2] The First Brother in the Mask. *Warton.*

[3] It never appeared under Milton's name till the year 1645.

THE PERSONS.

The ATTENDANT SPIRIT, *afterwards in the habit of* THYRSIS,
COMUS, *with his Crew.*
The LADY.
FIRST BROTHER.
SECOND BROTHER.
SABRINA, *the Nymph.*

COMUS.

The first Scene discovers a wild wood.

The ATTENDANT SPIRIT *descends, or enters.*

BEFORE the starry threshold of Jove's court
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes
Of bright aërial spirits live insphered
In regions mild of calm and serene air,
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot,
Which men call Earth; and, with low-thoughted care,
Confined and pester'd in this pinfold here,
Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,
Unmindful of the crown that Virtue gives,
After this mortal change, to her true servants,
Amongst the enthroned gods on sainted seats.
Yet some there be, that by due steps aspire
To lay their just hands on that golden key
That opes the palace of Eternity:
To such my errant is; and, but for such,
I would not soil these pure ambrosial weeds
With the rank vapours of this sin-worn mould.
But to my task. Neptune, besides the sway
Of every salt flood, and each ebbing stream,
Took in by lot 'twixt high and nether Jove
Imperial rule of all the sea-girt isles,

That, like to rich and various gems, inlay
The unadorned bosom of the deep;
Which he, to grace his tributary gods,
By course commits to several government,
And gives them leave to wear their sapphire crowns,
And wield their little tridents: but this isle,
The greatest and the best of all the main,
He quarters to his blue-hair'd deities;
And all this tract that fronts the falling sun
A noble peer of mickle trust and power
Has in his charge, with temper'd awe to guide
An old and haughty nation, proud in arms:
Where his fair offspring, nursed in princely lore,
Are coming to attend their father's state,
And new-entrusted sceptre: but their way
Lies through the perplex'd paths of this drear wood,
The nodding horror of whose shady brows
Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger;
And here their tender age might suffer peril,
But that by quick command from sovereign Jove
I was dispatch'd for their defence and guard:
And listen why; for I will tell you now
What never yet was heard in tale or song,
From old or modern bard, in hall or bower.
Bacchus, that first from out the purple grape
Crush'd the sweet poison of misused wine,
After the Tuscan mariners transform'd,
Coasting the Tyrrhene shore, as the winds listed,
On Circe's island fell: (who knows not Circe,
The daughter of the Sun, whose charmed cup
Whoever tasted lost his upright shape,
And downward fell into a groveling swine?)
This nymph, that gazed upon his clustering locks
With ivy berries wreathed, and his blithe youth,

Had by him, ere he parted thence, a son
Much like his father, but his mother more,
Whom therefore she brought up, and Comus named:
Who, ripe and frolic of his full-grown age,
Roving the Celtic and Iberian fields,
At last betakes him to this ominous wood;
And, in thick shelter of black shades embower'd,
Excels his mother at her mighty art,
Offering to every weary traveller
His orient liquor in a crystal glass,
To quench the drouth of Phœbus; which as they taste,
(For most do taste through fond intemperate thirst)
Soon as the potion works, their human countenance,
The express resemblance of the gods, is changed
Into some brutish form of wolf, or bear,
Or ounce, or tiger, hog, or bearded goat,
All other parts remaining as they were;
And they, so perfect is their misery,
Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,
But boast themselves more comely than before;
And all their friends and native home forget,
To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty.
Therefore when any, favour'd of high Jove,
Chances to pass through this adventurous glade,
Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star
I shoot from heaven, to give him safe convoy,
As now I do: but first I must put off
These my sky robes spun out of Iris' woof,
And take the weeds and likeness of a swain
That to the service of this house belongs,
Who, with his soft pipe and smooth-dittied song,
Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar,
And hush the waving woods; nor of less faith,

And in this office of his mountain watch
Likeliest, and nearest to the present aid
Of this occasion. But I hear the tread
Of hateful steps; I must be viewless now.

COMUS *enters, with a charming-rod in one hand, his glass in the other; with him a rout of monsters, headed like sundry sorts of wild beasts, but otherwise like men and women, their apparel glistering. They come in making a riotous and unruly noise, with torches in their hands.*

COMUS.

The star that bids the shepherd fold,
Now the top of heaven doth hold;
And the gilded car of day
His glowing axle doth allay
In the steep Atlantic stream;
And the slope sun his upward beam
Shoots against the dusky pole,
Pacing toward the other goal
Of his chamber in the East.
Meanwhile welcome Joy, and Feast,
Midnight Shout, and Revelry,
Tipsy Dance, and Jollity.
Braid your locks with rosy twine,
Dropping odours, dropping wine.
Rigour now is gone to bed,
And Advice with scrupulous head.
Strict Age and sour Severity,
With their grave saws, in slumber lie.
We, that are of purer fire,
Imitate the starry quire,
Who, in their nightly watchful spheres,
Lead in swift round the months and years.

The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove,
Now to the moon in wavering morrice move;
And, on the tawny sands and shelves,
Trip the pert faeries and the dapper elves.
By dimpled brook and fountain brim,
The wood-nymphs, deck'd with daisies trim,
Their merry wakes and pastimes keep.
What hath night to do with sleep?
Night hath better sweets to prove;
Venus now wakes, and wakens Love.
Come, let us our rites begin;
'Tis only daylight that makes sin,
Which these dun shades will ne'er report.—
Hail, goddess of nocturnal sport,
Dark-veil'd Cotytto! to whom the secret flame
Of midnight torches burns; mysterious dame,
That ne'er art call'd but when the dragon womb
Of Stygian darkness spits her thickest gloom,
And makes one blot of all the air;
Stay thy cloudy ebon chair,
Wherein thou ridest with Hecate, and befriend
Us thy vow'd priests, till utmost end
Of all thy dues be done, and none left out;
Ere the blabbing Eastern scout,
The nice morn, on the Indian steep
From her cabin'd loop-hole peep,
And to the tell-tale sun descry
Our conceal'd solemnity.—
Come, knit hands, and beat the ground
In a light fantastic round.

THE MEASURE.

Break off, break off; I feel the different pace
Of some chaste footing near about this ground,

Run to your shrouds, within these brakes and trees;
Our number may affright: some virgin sure
(For so I can distinguish by mine art)
Benighted in these woods. Now to my charms,
And to my wily trains; I shall ere long
Be well stock'd with as fair a herd as grazed
About my mother Circe. Thus I hurl
My dazzling spells into the spongy air,
Of power to cheat the eye with blear illusion,
And give it false presentments, lest the place
And my quaint habits breed astonishment,
And put the damsel to suspicious flight;
Which must not be, for that's against my course:
I, under fair pretence of friendly ends,
And well-placed words of glozing courtesy,
Baited with reasons not unplausible,
Wind me into the easy-hearted man,
And hug him into snares. When once her eye
Hath met the virtue of this magic dust,
I shall appear some harmless villager,
Whom thrift keeps up about his country gear.
But here she comes; I fairly step aside,
And hearken, if I may, her business here.—

The LADY *enters.*

Lady. This way the noise was, if mine ear be true,
My best guide now: methought it was the sound
Of riot and ill-managed merriment,
Such as the jocund flute, or gamesome pipe,
Stirs up among the loose unletter'd hinds;
When from their teeming flocks, and granges full,
In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan,
And thank the gods amiss. I should be loth

To meet the rudeness, and swill'd insolence
Of such late wassailers; yet O! where else
Shall I inform my unacquainted feet
In the blind mazes of this tangled wood?
My brothers, when they saw me wearied out
With this long way, resolving here to lodge
Under the spreading favour of these pines,
Stepp'd, as they said, to the next thicket side,
To bring me berries, or such cooling fruit
As the kind hospitable woods provide.
They left me then, when the gray-hooded Even,
Like a sad votarist in palmer's weed,
Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus' wain:
But where they are, and why they came not back,
Is now the labour of my thoughts: 'tis likeliest
They had engaged their wandering steps too far;
And envious Darkness, ere they could return,
Had stole them from me: else, O thievish Night,
Why should'st thou, but for some felonious end,
In thy dark lantern thus close up the stars,
That Nature hung in heaven, and fill'd their lamps
With everlasting oil, to give due light
To the misled and lonely traveller?
This is the place, as well as I may guess,
Whence even now the tumult of loud mirth
Was rife, and perfect in my listening ear;
Yet nought but single darkness do I find.
What might this be? A thousand fantasies
Begin to throng into my memory,
Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,
And aery tongues, that syllable men's names
On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses.
These thoughts may startle well, but not astound,
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended

By a strong siding champion, Conscience.—
O welcome pure-eyed Faith, white-handed Hope,
Thou hovering angel, girt with golden wings,
And thou, unblemish'd form of Chastity!
I see ye visibly, and now believe
That He, the Supreme Good, to whom all things ill
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,
Would send a glistering guardian, if need were,
To keep my life and honour unassail'd.
Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night?
I did not err, there does a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night,
And casts a gleam over this tufted grove:
I cannot halloo to my brothers, but
Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest
I 'll venture; for my new-enliven'd spirits
Prompt me; and they perhaps are not far off.

SONG.

Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph, that livest unseen
Within thy aery shell,
By slow Meander's margent green,
And in the violet-embroider'd vale,
Where the lovelorn nightingale
Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well;
Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair
That likest thy Narcissus are?
O, if thou have
Hid them in some flowery cave,
Tell me but where,
Sweet queen of parley, daughter of the sphere!
So mayst thou be translated to the skies,
And give resounding grace to all heaven's harmonies.

Enter COMUS.

Comus. Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testify his hidden residence.
How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence through the empty-vaulted night,
At every fall smoothing the raven down
Of darkness, till it smiled! I have oft heard
My mother Circe, with the Syrens three,
Amidst the flowery-kirtled Naiades,
Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs;
Who, as they sung, would take the prison'd soul,
And lap it in Elysium: Scylla wept,
And chid her barking waves into attention,
And fell Charybdis murmur'd soft applause:
Yet they in pleasing slumber lull'd the sense,
And in sweet madness robb'd it of itself;
But such a sacred and homefelt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
I never heard till now.—I 'll speak to her,
And she shall be my queen.—Hail, foreign wonder!
Whom certain these rough shades did never breed,
Unless the goddess that in rural shrine
Dwell'st here with Pan, or Sylvan; by bless'd song
Forbidding every bleak unkindly fog
To touch the prosperous growth of this tall wood.

Lad. Nay, gentle shepherd, ill is lost that praise
That is address'd to unattending ears;
Not any boast of skill, but extreme shift
How to regain my sever'd company

Compell'd me to awake the courteous Echo
To give me answer from her mossy couch.

Com. What chance, good lady, hath bereft you thus?

Lad. Dim darkness, and this leafy labyrinth.

Com. Could that divide you from near-ushering guides?

Lad. They left me weary on a grassy turf.

Com. By falsehood, or discourtesy, or why?

Lad. To seek in the valley some cool friendly spring.

Com. And left your fair side all unguarded, lady?

Lad. They were but twain, and purposed quick return.

Com. Perhaps forestalling night prevented them.

Lad. How easy my misfortune is to hit!

Com. Imports their loss, beside the present need?

Lad. No less than if I should my brothers lose.

Com. Were they of manly prime, or youthful bloom?

Lad. As smooth as Hebe's their unrazor'd lips.

Com. Two such I saw, what time the labour'd ox
In his loose traces from the furrow came,
And the swink'd hedger at his supper sat;
I saw them under a green mantling vine,
That crawls along the side of yon small hill,
Plucking ripe clusters from the tender shoots;
Their port was more than human, as they stood:
I took it for a faery vision
Of some gay creatures of the element,
That in the colours of the rainbow live,
And play in the plighted clouds. I was awe-struck,
And, as I pass'd, I worshipp'd: if those you seek,

It were a journey like the path to heaven
To help you find them.

Lad. Gentle villager,
What readiest way would bring me to that place?

Com. Due west it rises from this shrubby point.

Lad. To find out that, good shepherd, I suppose,
In such a scant allowance of starlight,
Would overtask the best land-pilot's art,
Without the sure guess of well-practised feet.

Com. I know each lane, and every alley green,
Dingle, or bushy dell of this wild wood,
And every bosky bourn from side to side,
My daily walks and ancient neighbourhood;
And if your stray attendants be yet lodged,
Or shroud within these limits, I shall know
Ere morrow wake, or the low-roosted lark
From her thatch'd pallet rouse; if otherwise,
I can conduct you, lady, to a low
But loyal cottage, where you may be safe
Till further quest.

Lad. Shepherd, I take thy word,
And trust thy honest offer'd courtesy,
Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds
With smoky rafters, than in tapestry halls
In courts of princes, where it first was named,
And yet is most pretended: in a place
Less warranted than this, or less secure,
I cannot be, that I should fear to change it.—
Eye me, bless'd Providence, and square my trial
To my proportion'd strength.—Shepherd, lead on.

[*Exeunt.*

Enter the TWO BROTHERS.

El. Br. Unmuffle, ye faint stars; and thou, fair moon,

That wont'st to love the traveller's benison,
Stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud,
And disinherit Chaos, that reigns here
In double night of darkness and of shades;
Or, if your influence be quite damm'd up
With black usurping mists, some gentle taper,
Though a rush-candle from the wicker hole
Of some clay habitation, visit us
With thy long-levell'd rule of streaming light;
And thou shalt be our star of Arcady,
Or Tyrian Cynosure.

Sec. Br. Or, if our eyes
Be barr'd that happiness, might we but hear
The folded flocks penn'd in their wattled cotes,
Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops,
Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock
Count the night-watches to his feathery dames,
'Twould be some solace yet, some little cheering,
In this close dungeon of innumerous boughs.
But, O that hapless virgin, our lost sister!
Where may she wander now, whither betake her
From the chill dew, among rude burs and thistles?
Perhaps some cold bank is her bolster now,
Or, 'gainst the rugged bark of some broad elm
Leans her unpillow'd head, fraught with sad fears.
What, if in wild amazement and affright?
Or, while we speak, within the direful grasp
Of savage hunger, or of savage heat?

El. Br. Peace, brother; be not over-exquisite
To cast the fashion of uncertain evils:
For grant they be so, while they rest unknown,
What need a man forestal his date of grief,
And run to meet what he would most avoid?
Or if they be but false alarms of fear,

How bitter is such self-delusion!
I do not think my sister so to seek,
Or so unprincipled in Virtue's book,
And the sweet peace that goodness bosoms ever,
As that the single want of light and noise
(Not being in danger, as I trust she is not)
Could stir the constant mood of her calm thoughts,
And put them into misbecoming plight.
Virtue could see to do what Virtue would
By her own radiant light, though sun and moon
Were in the flat sea sunk. And Wisdom's self
Oft seeks to sweet retired solitude;
Where, with her best nurse, Contemplation,
She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings,
That in the various bustle of resort
Were all-to ruffled, and sometimes impair'd.
He that has light within his own clear breast,
May sit i' the centre, and enjoy bright day:
But he, that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts,
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun;
Himself is his own dungeon.

Sec. Br. 'Tis most true,
That musing Meditation most affects
The pensive secresy of desert cell,
Far from the cheerful haunt of men and herds,
And sits as safe as in a senate-house;
For who would rob a hermit of his weeds,
His few books, or his beads, or maple dish,
Or do his gray hairs any violence?
But Beauty, like the fair Hesperian tree
Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard
Of dragon-watch with unenchanted eye,
To save her blossoms, and defend her fruit,
From the rash hand of bold Incontinence.

You may as well spread out the unsunn'd heaps
Of misers' treasure by an outlaw's den,
And tell me it is safe, as bid me hope
Danger will wink on Opportunity,
And let a single helpless maiden pass
Uninjured in this wild surrounding waste.
Of night, or loneliness, it recks me not;
I fear the dread events that dog them both,
Lest some ill-greeting touch attempt the person
Of our unowned sister.

El. Br. I do not, brother,
Infer, as if I thought my sister's state
Secure, without all doubt or controversy;
Yet, where an equal poise of hope and fear
Does arbitrate the event, my nature is
That I incline to hope, rather than fear,
And gladly banish squint suspicion.
My sister is not so defenceless left
As you imagine; she has a hidden strength,
Which you remember not.

Sec. Br. What hidden strength,
Unless the strength of Heaven, if you mean that?

El. Br. I mean that too, but yet a hidden strength,
Which, if Heaven gave it, may be term'd her own:
'Tis Chastity, my brother, Chastity:
She that has that, is clad in complete steel;
And, like a quiver'd Nymph with arrows keen,
May trace huge forests, and unharbour'd heaths,
Infamous hills, and sandy perilous wilds;
Where, through the sacred rays of Chastity,
No savage fierce, bandit, or mountaineer,
Will dare to soil her virgin purity:
Yea there, where very Desolation dwells,
By grots and caverns shagg'd with horrid shades,

She may pass on with unblench'd majesty;
Be it not done in pride, or in presumption.
Some say, no evil thing that walks by night
In fog or fire, by lake or moorish fen,
Blue meagre hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost
That breaks his magic chains at curfew time,
No goblin, or swart faery of the mine,
Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity.
Do ye believe me yet, or shall I call
Antiquity from the old schools of Greece
To testify the arms of Chastity?
Hence had the huntress Dian her dread bow,
Fair silver-shafted queen, for ever chaste,
Wherewith she tamed the brinded lioness
And spotted mountain-pard, but set at naught
The frivolous bolt of Cupid; gods and men
Fear'd her stern frown, and she was queen o' the woods.
What was that snaky-headed Gorgon shield
That wise Minerva wore, unconquer'd virgin,
Wherewith she freezed her foes to congeal'd stone,
But rigid looks of chaste austerity,
And noble grace, that dash'd brute violence
With sudden adoration and blank awe?
So dear to Heaven is saintly Chastity,
That, when a soul is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried angels lackey her,
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt;
And, in clear dream and solemn vision,
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear;
Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
Begin to cast a beam on the outward shape,
The unpolluted temple of the mind,
And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,

Till all be made immortal: but when Lust,
By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,
But most by lewd and lavish act of sin,
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
The soul grows clotted by contagion,
Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite lose
The divine property of her first being.
Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp,
Oft seen in charnel vaults and sepulchres
Lingering, and sitting by a new-made grave,
As loth to leave the body that it loved,
And link'd itself by carnal sensuality
To a degenerate and degraded state.
Sec. Br. How charming is divine Philosophy!
Not harsh, and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute;
And a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets,
Where no crude surfeit reigns.
El. Br. List, list; I hear
Some far-off halloo break the silent air.
Sec. Br. Methought so too; what should it be?
El. Br. For certain
Either some one like us night-founder'd here,
Or else some neighbour woodman, or, at worst,
Some roving robber calling to his fellows.
Sec. Br. Heaven keep my sister! Again, again, and near!
Best draw, and stand upon our guard.
El. Br. I 'll halloo:
If he be friendly, he comes well; if not,
Defence is a good cause, and Heaven be for us!

Enter the ATTENDANT SPIRIT, *habited like a shepherd.*

That halloo I should know; what are you? speak;
Come not too near, you fall on iron stakes else.
Spir. What voice is that? my young lord? speak again.
Sec. Br. O brother, 'tis my father's shepherd, sure.
El. Br. Thyrsis? Whose artful strains have oft delay'd
The huddling brook to hear his madrigal,
And sweeten'd every muskrose of the dale?
How camest thou here, good swain? hath any ram
Slipp'd from the fold, or young kid lost his dam,
Or straggling wether the pent flock forsook?
How couldst thou find this dark sequester'd nook?
Spir. O my loved master's heir, and his next joy,
I came not here on such a trivial toy
As a stray'd ewe, or to pursue the stealth
Of pilfering wolf; not all the fleecy wealth,
That doth enrich these downs, is worth a thought
To this my errand, and the care it brought.
But, O my virgin lady, where is she?
How chance she is not in your company?
El. Br. To tell thee sadly, shepherd, without blame,
Or our neglect, we lost her as we came.
Spir. Ay me unhappy! then my fears are true.
El. Br. What fears, good Thyrsis? Prithee, briefly show.
Spir. I'll tell ye; 'tis not vain or fabulous,
(Though so esteem'd by shallow ignorance)
What the sage poets, taught by the heavenly Muse,

Storied of old in high immortal verse,
Of dire chimeras, and enchanted isles,
And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to hell;
For such there be, but unbelief is blind.
Within the navel of this hideous wood,
Immured in cypress shades, a sorcerer dwells,
Of Bacchus and of Circe born, great Comus,
Deep skill'd in all his mother's witcheries;
And here to every thirsty wanderer
By sly enticement gives his baneful cup,
With many murmurs mix'd, whose pleasing poison
The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,
And the inglorious likeness of a beast
Fixes instead, unmoulding reason's mintage
Character'd in the face: this have I learnt
Tending my flocks hard by i' the hilly crofts,
That brow this bottom-glade; whence night by night
He and his monstrous rout are heard to howl,
Like stabled wolves, or tigers at their prey,
Doing abhorred rites to Hecaté
In their obscured haunts of inmost bowers.
Yet have they many baits, and guileful spells,
To inveigle and invite the unwary sense
Of them that pass unweeting by the way.
This evening late, by then the chewing flocks
Had ta'en their supper on the savoury herb
Of knot-grass dew-besprent, and were in fold,
I sat me down to watch upon a bank
With ivy canopied, and interwove
With flaunting honeysuckle, and began,
Wrapt in a pleasing fit of melancholy,
To meditate my rural minstrelsy,
Till Fancy had her fill; but, ere a close,
The wonted roar was up amidst the woods,

And fill'd the air with barbarous dissonance;
At which I ceased, and listen'd them a while,
Till an unusual stop of sudden silence
Gave respite to the drowsy frighted steeds,
That draw the litter of close-curtain'd Sleep:
At last a soft and solemn-breathing sound
Rose like a steam of rich distill'd perfumes,
And stole upon the air, that even Silence
Was took ere she was 'ware, and wish'd she might
Deny her nature, and be never more
Still, to be so displaced. I was all ear,
And took in strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of Death; but O! ere long,
Too well I did perceive it was the voice
Of my most honour'd lady, your dear sister.
Amazed I stood, harrow'd with grief and fear,
And, O poor hapless nightingale, thought I,
How sweet thou sing'st, how near the deadly snare!
Then down the lawns I ran with headlong haste,
Through paths and turnings often trod by day,
Till, guided by mine ear, I found the place
Where that damn'd wizard, hid in sly disguise,
(For so by certain signs I knew) had met
Already, ere my best speed could prevent,
The aidless innocent lady, his wish'd prey;
Who gently ask'd if he had seen such two,
Supposing him some neighbour villager.
Longer I durst not stay, but soon I guess'd
Ye were the two she meant; with that I sprung
Into swift flight, till I had found you here;
But further know I not.

Sec. Br. O night, and shades!
How are ye join'd with Hell in triple knot
Against the unarm'd weakness of one virgin,

Alone, and helpless! Is this the confidence
You gave me, brother?
El. Br. Yes, and keep it still;
Lean on it safely; not a period
Shall be unsaid for me: against the threats
Of malice, or of sorcery, or that power
Which erring men call Chance, this I hold firm,—
Virtue may be assail'd, but never hurt,
Surprised by unjust force, but not enthrall'd;
Yea, even that, which mischief meant most harm,
Shall in the happy trial prove most glory:
But evil on itself shall back recoil,
And mix no more with goodness; when at last
Gather'd like scum, and settled to itself,
It shall be in eternal restless change
Self-fed, and self-consumed: if this fail,
The pillar'd firmament is rottenness,
And earth's base built on stubble.—But come, let's on.
Against the opposing will and arm of Heaven
May never this just sword be lifted up;
But for that damn'd magician, let him be girt
With all the grisly legions that troop
Under the sooty flag of Acheron,
Harpies and hydras, or all the monstrous forms
'Twixt Africa and Ind, I'll find him out,
And force him to return his purchase back,
Or drag him by the curls to a foul death,
Cursed as his life.
Spir. Alas! good venturous youth,
I love thy courage yet, and bold emprise;
But here thy sword can do thee little stead;
Far other arms and other weapons must
Be those, that quell the might of hellish charms:

He with his bare wand can unthread thy joints,
And crumble all thy sinews.
El. Br. Why prithee, shepherd,
How durst thou then thyself approach so near,
As to make this relation?
Spir. Care, and utmost shifts,
How to secure the lady from surprisal,
Brought to my mind a certain shepherd lad,
Of small regard to see to, yet well skill'd
In every virtuous plant, and healing herb,
That spreads her verdant leaf to the morning ray:
He loved me well, and oft would beg me sing;
Which when I did, he on the tender grass
Would sit, and hearken ev'n to ecstasy,
And in requital ope his leathern scrip,
And show me simples of a thousand names,
Telling their strange and vigorous faculties:
Amongst the rest a small unsightly root,
But of divine effect, he cull'd me out;
The leaf was darkish, and had prickles on it,
But in another country, as he said,
Bore a bright golden flower, but not in this soil:
Unknown, and like esteem'd, and the dull swain
Treads on it daily with his clouted shoon:
And yet more med'cinal is it than that Moly,
That Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave;
He call'd it Hæmony, and gave it me,
And bade me keep it as of sovereign use
'Gainst all enchantments, mildew blast, or damp,
Or ghastly furies' apparition.
I pursed it up, but little reckoning made,
Till now that this extremity compell'd:
But now I find it true; for by this means
I knew the foul enchanter, though disguised,

Enter'd the very lime-twigs of his spells,
And yet came off: if you have this about you,
(As I will give you when we go) you may
Boldly assault the necromancer's hall;
Where if he be, with dauntless hardihood
And brandish'd blade rush on him; break his glass,
And shed the luscious liquor on the ground,
But seize his wand; though he and his cursed crew
Fierce sign of battle make, and menace high,
Or like the sons of Vulcan vomit smoke,
Yet will they soon retire, if he but shrink.

El. Br. Thyrsis, lead on apace, I'll follow thee;
And some good angel bear a shield before us.

The Scene changes to a stately palace, set out with all manner of deliciousness: soft music, tables spread with all dainties. COMUS *appears with his rabble, and the* LADY *set in an enchanted chair, to whom he offers his glass, which she puts by, and goes about to rise.*

COMUS.

Nay, lady, sit; if I but wave this wand,
Your nerves are all chain'd up in alabaster,
And you a statue, or, as Daphne was,
Root-bound that fled Apollo.

Lad. Fool, do not boast;
Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind
With all thy charms, although this corporal rind
Thou hast immanacled, while Heaven sees good.

Com. Why are you vex'd, lady? Why do you frown?
Here dwell no frowns, nor anger; from these gates
Sorrow flies far: see, here be all the pleasures
That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts

When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns
Brisk as the April buds in primrose-season.
And first, behold this cordial julep here,
That flames and dances in his crystal bounds,
With spirits of balm and fragrant sirops mix'd:
Not that Nepenthes, which the wife of Thone
In Egypt gave to Jove-born Helena,
Is of such power to stir up joy as this,
To life so friendly, or so cool to thirst.
Why should you be so cruel to yourself,
And to those dainty limbs, which Nature lent
For gentle usage and soft delicacy?
But you invert the covenants of her trust,
And harshly deal, like an ill borrower,
With that which you received on other terms:
Scorning the unexempt condition,
By which all mortal frailty must subsist,
Refreshment after toil, ease after pain,
That have been tired all day without repast,
And timely rest have wanted; but, fair virgin,
This will restore all soon.

Lad. 'Twill not, false traitor!
'Twill not restore the truth and honesty,
That thou hast banish'd from thy tongue with lies.
Was this the cottage, and the safe abode,
Thou told'st me of? What grim aspects are these,
These ugly-headed monsters? Mercy guard me!
Hence with thy brew'd enchantments, foul deceiver!
Hast thou betray'd my credulous innocence
With visor'd falsehood and base forgery?
And would'st thou seek again to trap me here
With lickerish baits, fit to ensnare a brute?
Were it a draught for Juno when she banquets,
I would not taste thy treasonous offer; none

But such as are good men can give good things;
And that which is not good is not delicious
To a well-govern'd and wise appetite.
Com. O foolishness of men! that lend their ears
To those budge doctors of the Stoic fur,
And fetch their precepts from the Cynic tub,
Praising the lean and sallow Abstinence.
Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth
With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,
Covering the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks,
Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable,
But all to please and sate the curious taste?
And set to work millions of spinning worms,
That in their green shops weave the smooth-hair'd silk,
To deck her sons; and, that no corner might
Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loins [gems,
She hutch'd the all-worshipp'd ore, and precious
To store her children with? if all the world
Should in a pet of temperance feed on pulse,
Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but frieze,
The All-giver would be unthank'd, would be unpraised,
Not half his riches known, and yet despised;
And we should serve him as a grudging master,
As a penurious niggard of his wealth;
And live like Nature's bastards, not her sons,
Who would be quite surcharged with her own weight,
And strangled with her waste fertility;
The earth cumber'd, and the wing'd air dark'd with plumes,
The herds would over-multitude their lords,
The sea o'erfraught would swell, and the unsought diamonds

Would so imblaze the forehead of the deep,
And so bestud with stars, that they below
Would grow inured to light, and come at last
To gaze upon the sun with shameless brows.
List, lady; be not coy, and be not cozen'd
With that same vaunted name, Virginity.
Beauty is Nature's coin, must not be hoarded,
But must be current; and the good thereof
Consists in mutual and partaken bliss,
Unsavoury in the enjoyment of itself:
If you let slip time, like a neglected rose
It withers on the stalk with languish'd head.
Beauty is Nature's brag, and must be shown
In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities,
Where most may wonder at the workmanship;
It is for homely features to keep home,
They had their name thence; coarse complexions,
And cheeks of sorry grain, will serve to ply
The sampler, and to tease the housewife's wool.
What need a vermeil-tinctured lip for that,
Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the morn?
There was another meaning in these gifts;
Think what, and be advised; you are but young yet.

Lad. I had not thought to have unlock'd my lips
In this unhallow'd air, but that this juggler
Would think to charm my judgment, as mine eyes,
Obtruding false rules prank'd in reason's garb.
I hate when Vice can bolt her arguments,
And Virtue has no tongue to check her pride.—
Impostor! do not charge most innocent Nature,
As if she would her children should be riotous
With her abundance; she, good cateress,
Means her provision only to the good,
That live according to her sober laws,

And holy dictate of spare Temperance:
If every just man, that now pines with want,
Had but a moderate and beseeming share
Of that which lewdly-pamper'd Luxury
Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,
Nature's full blessings would be well dispensed
In unsuperfluous even proportion,
And she no whit encumber'd with her store;
And then the Giver would be better thank'd,
His praise due paid; for swinish Gluttony
Ne'er looks to Heaven amidst his gorgeous feast,
But with besotted base ingratitude
Crams, and blasphemes his Feeder. Shall I go on?
Or have I said enough? To him that dares
Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words
Against the sun-clad power of Chastity,
Fain would I something say, yet to what end?
Thou hast nor ear nor soul, to apprehend
The sublime notion, and high mystery,
That must be utter'd to unfold the sage
And serious doctrine of Virginity;
And thou art worthy that thou shouldst not know
More happiness than this thy present lot.
Enjoy your dear wit, and gay rhetoric,
That hath so well been taught her dazzling fence;
Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinced:
Yet, should I try, the uncontrolled worth
Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits
To such a flame of sacred vehemence,
That dumb things would be moved to sympathize,
And the brute Earth would lend her nerves, and shake,
Till all thy magic structures, rear'd so high,
Were shatter'd into heaps o'er thy false head.

Com. She fables not; I feel that I do fear
Her words set off by some superior power;
And though not mortal, yet a cold shuddering dew
Dips me all o'er, as when the wrath of Jove
Speaks thunder, and the chains of Erebus,
To some of Saturn's crew. I must dissemble,
And try her yet more strongly.—Come, no more;
This is mere moral babble, and direct
Against the canon laws of our foundation:
I must not suffer this; yet 'tis but the lees
And settlings of a melancholy blood:
But this will cure all straight; one sip of this
Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight,
Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be wise, and taste.—

The BROTHERS *rush in with swords drawn, wrest his glass out of his hand, and break it against the ground: his rout make sign of resistance, but are all driven in. The* ATTENDANT SPIRIT *comes in.*

SPIRIT.

What, have you let the false enchanter 'scape?
O ye mistook, ye should have snatch'd his wand,
And bound him fast; without his rod reversed,
And backward mutters of dissevering power,
We cannot free the lady that sits here
In stony fetters fix'd, and motionless:
Yet stay, be not disturb'd: now I bethink me,
Some other means I have which may be used,
Which once of Melibœus old I learnt,
The soothest shepherd that e'er piped on plains.
There is a gentle nymph not far from hence,
That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn stream;

Sabrina is her name, a virgin pure:
Whilom she was the daughter of Locrine,
That had the sceptre from his father Brute.
She, guiltless damsel, flying the mad pursuit
Of her enraged stepdame Guendolen,
Commended her fair innocence to the flood,
That stay'd her flight with his cross-flowing course
The water-nymphs, that in the bottom play'd,
Held up their pearled wrists, and took her in,
Bearing her straight to aged Nereus' hall;
Who, piteous of her woes, rear'd her lank head,
And gave her to his daughters to imbathe
In nectar'd lavers, strew'd with asphodel;
And through the porch and inlet of each sense
Dropp'd in ambrosial oils, till she revived,
And underwent a quick immortal change,
Made goddess of the river: still she retains
Her maiden gentleness, and oft at eve
Visits the herds along the twilight meadows,
Helping all urchin blasts, and ill-luck signs
That the shrewd meddling elf delights to make,
Which she with precious vial'd liquors heals;
For which the shepherds at their festivals
Carol her goodness loud in rustic lays,
And throw sweet garland wreaths into her stream
Of pansies, pinks, and gaudy daffodils.
And, as the old swain said, she can unlock
The clasping charm, and thaw the numbing spell,
If she be right invoked in warbled song;
For maidenhood she loves, and will be swift
To aid a virgin, such as was herself,
In hard-besetting need; this will I try,
And add the power of some adjuring verse.

SONG.

Sabrina fair,
  Listen where thou art sitting
Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
  In twisted braids of lilies knitting
The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair;
  Listen for dear honour's sake,
  Goddess of the silver lake,
    Listen, and save.
Listen, and appear to us,
In name of great Oceanus;
By the earth-shaking Neptune's mace,
And Tethys' grave majestic pace,
By hoary Nereus' wrinkled look,
And the Carpathian wizard's hook,
By scaly Triton's winding shell,
And old soothsaying Glaucus' spell,
By Leucothea's lovely hands,
And her son that rules the strands,
By Thetis' tinsel-slipper'd feet,
And the songs of Sirens sweet,
By dead Parthenope's dear tomb,
And fair Ligea's golden comb,
Wherewith she sits on diamond rocks,
Sleeking her soft alluring locks;
By all the Nymphs that nightly dance
Upon thy streams with wily glance,
Rise, rise, and heave thy rosy head,
From thy coral-paven bed,
And bridle in thy headlong wave,
Till thou our summons answer'd have.
    Listen, and save.

SABRINA *rises, attended by Water-nymphs, and sings.*

By the rushy-fringed bank,
Where grows the willow and the osier dank,
My sliding chariot stays,
Thick set with agate, and the azure sheen
Of turkis blue, and emerald green,
That in the channel strays;
Whilst from off the waters fleet
Thus I set my printless feet
O'er the cowslip's velvet head,
That bends not as I tread;
Gentle swain, at thy request,
I am here.

Sp. Goddess dear,
We implore thy powerful hand
To undo the charmed band
Of true virgin here distress'd,
Through the force, and through the wile,
Of unbless'd enchanter vile.

Sabr. Shepherd, 'tis my office best
To help ensnared chastity:
Brightest lady, look on me;
Thus I sprinkle on thy breast
Drops, that from my fountain pure
I have kept, of precious cure;
Thrice upon thy finger's tip,
Thrice upon thy rubied lip:
Next this marble-venom'd seat,
Smear'd with gums of glutinous heat,
I touch with chaste palms moist and cold:—
Now the spell hath lost his hold;
And I must haste, ere morning hour,
To wait in Amphitrite's bower.

SABRINA *descends, and the* LADY *rises out of her seat.*

Sp. Virgin, daughter of Locrine,
Sprung of old Anchises' line,
May thy brimmed waves for this
Their full tribute never miss
From a thousand petty rills,
That tumble down the snowy hills:
Summer drouth, or singed air,
Never scorch thy tresses fair,
Nor wet October's torrent flood
Thy molten crystal fill with mud;
May thy billows roll ashore
The beryl and the golden ore;
May thy lofty head be crown'd
With many a tower and terrace round,
And here and there thy banks upon
With groves of myrrh and cinnamon.
Come, lady, while Heaven lends us grace,
Let us fly this cursed place,
Lest the sorcerer us entice
With some other new device.
Not a waste or needless sound,
Till we come to holier ground;
I shall be your faithful guide
Through this gloomy covert wide,
And not many furlongs thence
Is your father's residence,
Where this night are met in state
Many a friend to gratulate
His wish'd presence; and, beside,
All the swains, that there abide,

With jigs and rural dance resort;
We shall catch them at their sport,
And our sudden coming there
Will double all their mirth and cheer:
Come, let us haste, the stars grow high,
But night sits monarch yet in the mid sky.

The Scene changes, presenting Ludlow town and the President's castle; then come in Country Dancers, after them the ATTENDANT SPIRIT, *with the Two* BROTHERS, *and the* LADY.

SONG.

Sp. Back, shepherds, back; enough your play,
Till next sunshine holiday:
Here be, without duck or nod,
Other trippings to be trod
Of lighter toes, and such court guise
As Mercury did first devise,
With the mincing Dryades,
On the lawns, and on the leas.

This second Song presents them to their Father and Mother.

Noble lord, and lady bright,
I have brought ye new delight:
Here behold so goodly grown
Three fair branches of your own;
Heaven hath timely tried their youth,
Their faith, their patience, and their truth,
And sent them here through hard assays
With a crown of deathless praise,

To triumph in victorious dance
O'er sensual Folly and Intemperance.

The Dances ended, the SPIRIT *epilogises.*

Sp. To the ocean now I fly,
And those happy climes that lie
Where day never shuts his eye,
Up in the broad fields of the sky.
There I suck the liquid air
All amidst the gardens fair
Of Hesperus, and his daughters three,
That sing about the golden tree:
Along the crisped shades and bowers
Revels the spruce and jocund Spring;
The Graces, and the rosy-bosom'd Hours,
Thither all their bounties bring;
There eternal summer dwells,
And west winds, with musky wing,
About the cedar'd alleys fling
Nard and cassia's balmy smells.
Iris there with humid bow
Waters the odorous banks, that blow
Flowers of more mingled hue
Than her purfled scarf can shew;
And drenches with Elysian dew
(List, mortals, if your ears be true)
Beds of hyacinth and roses,
Where young Adonis oft reposes,
Waxing well of his deep wound
In slumber soft, and on the ground
Sadly sits the Assyrian queen:
But far above, in spangled sheen,
Celestial Cupid, her famed son, advanced,
Holds his dear Psyche sweet entranced,

After her wandering labours long,
Till free consent the gods among
Make her his eternal bride,
And from her fair unspotted side
Two blissful twins are to be born,
Youth and Joy; so Jove hath sworn.
But now my task is smoothly done,
I can fly, or I can run,
Quickly to the green earth's end,
Where the bow'd welkin slow doth bend;
And from thence can soar as soon
To the corners of the moon.
Mortals, that would follow me,
Love Virtue—she alone is free:
She can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime;
Or if Virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her.

ARCADES.

Part of an Entertainment presented to the Countess Dowager of Derby at Harefield, by some noble persons of her family; who appear on the scene in pastoral habit, moving toward the seat of state, with this Song.

I. SONG.

Look, nymphs and shepherds, look,
What sudden blaze of majesty
Is that which we from hence descry,
Too divine to be mistook:
This, this is she
To whom our vows and wishes bend;
Here our solemn search hath end.

Fame, that, her high worth to raise,
Seem'd erst so lavish and profuse,
We may justly now accuse
Of detraction from her praise;
Less than half we find express'd,
Envy bid conceal the rest.

Mark, what radiant state she spreads
In circle round her shining throne,
Shooting her beams like silver threads;
This, this is she alone,
Sitting like a goddess bright,
In the centre of her light.

Might she the wise Latona be,
Or the tower'd Cybele,
Mother of a hundred gods?
Juno dares not give her odds:
Who had thought this clime had held
A deity so unparallel'd?

As they come forward, the GENIUS *of the wood appears, and, turning towards them, speaks.*

GENIUS.

Stay, gentle swains, for, though in this disguise,
I see bright honour sparkle through your eyes;
Of famous Arcady ye are, and sprung
Of that renowned flood, so often sung,
Divine Alphéus, who by secret sluice
Stole under seas to meet his Arethuse;
And ye, the breathing roses of the wood,
Fair silver-buskin'd nymphs, as great and good;
I know, this quest of yours, and free intent,
Was all in honour and devotion meant
To the great mistress of yon princely shrine,
Whom with low reverence I adore as mine;
And, with all helpful service, will comply
To further this night's glad solemnity;
And lead ye where ye may more near behold
What shallow-searching Fame hath left untold;
Which I full oft, amidst these shades alone,
Have sat to wonder at, and gaze upon:
For know, by lot from Jove, I am the Power
Of this fair wood, and live in oaken bower,
To nurse the saplings tall, and curl the grove
With ringlets quaint, and wanton windings wove.
And all my plants I save from nightly ill
Of noisome winds, and blasting vapours chill;

And from the boughs brush off the evil dew,
And heal the harms of thwarting thunder blue,
Or what the cross dire-looking planet smites,
Or hurtful worm with canker'd venom bites.
When evening gray doth rise, I fetch my round
Over the mount and all this hallow'd ground;
And early, ere the odorous breath of morn
Awakes the slumbering leaves, or tassel'd horn
Shakes the high thicket, haste I all about,
Number my ranks, and visit every sprout
With puissant words, and murmurs made to bless:
But else in deep of night, when drowsiness
Hath lock'd up mortal sense, then listen I
To the celestial Sirens' harmony,
That sit upon the nine infolded spheres,
And sing to those that hold the vital shears,
And turn the adamantine spindle round,
On which the fate of gods and men is wound.
Such sweet compulsion doth in music lie,
To lull the daughters of Necessity,
And keep unsteady Nature to her law,
And the low world in measured motion draw
After the heavenly tune, which none can hear
Of human mould, with gross unpurged ear;
And yet such music worthiest were to blaze
The peerless height of her immortal praise,
Whose lustre leads us, and for her most fit,
If my inferior hand or voice could hit
Inimitable sounds: yet, as we go,
Whate'er the skill of lesser gods can show
I will essay, her worth to celebrate,
And so attend ye toward her glittering state,
Where ye may all, that are of noble stem,
Approach, and kiss her sacred vesture's hem.

II. SONG.

O'er the smooth enamell'd green,
Where no print of step hath been,
Follow me, as I sing
And touch the warbled string,
Under the shady roof
Of branching elm star-proof.
Follow me;
I will bring you where she sits,
Clad in splendour, as befits
Her deity.
Such a rural queen
All Arcadia hath not seen.

III. SONG.

Nymphs and shepherds, dance no more
By sandy Ladon's lilied banks;
On old Lycæus, or Cyllene hoar,
Trip no more in twilight ranks;
Though Erymanth your loss deplore,
A better soil shall give ye thanks.
From the stony Mænalus
Bring your flocks, and live with us;
Here ye shall have greater grace
To serve the lady of this place.
Though Syrinx your Pan's mistress were,
Yet Syrinx well might wait on her.
Such a rural queen
All Arcadia hath not seen.

SAMSON AGONISTES:

A DRAMATIC POEM.

THE ARGUMENT.

Samson, made captive, blind, and now in the prison at Gaza, there to labour as in a common workhouse, on a festival-day, in the general cessation from labour, comes forth into the open air, to a place nigh, somewhat retired, there to sit awhile and bemoan his condition: where he happens at length to be visited by certain friends and equals of his tribe, which make the Chorus, who seek to comfort him what they can; then by his old father Manoah, who endeavours the like, and withal tells him his purpose to procure his liberty by ransom; lastly, that this feast was proclaimed by the Philistines as a day of thanksgiving for their deliverance from the hands of Samson, which yet more troubles him. Manoah then departs to prosecute his endeavour with the Philistine lords for Samson's redemption; who in the meanwhile is visited by other persons, and lastly by a public officer, to require his coming to the feast before the lords and people, to play or show his strength in their presence. He at first refuses, dismissing the public officer with absolute denial to come: at length, persuaded inwardly that this was from God, he yields to go along with him, who came now the second time with great threatenings to fetch him. The Chorus yet remaining on the place, Manoah returns full of joyful hope to procure ere long his son's deliverance: in the midst of which discourse a Hebrew comes in haste, confusedly at first, and afterward more distinctly, relating the catastrophe, what Samson had done to the Philistines, and by accident to himself; wherewith the tragedy ends.

SAMSON AGONISTES.

THE PERSONS.

SAMSON.	HARAPHA *of Gath.*
MANOAH, *the Father of Samson.*	*Public Officer.*
DALILAH, *his Wife.*	*Messenger.*
	Chorus of Danites.

The Scene before the Prison in Gaza.

SAMSON [*Attendant leading him*].

A LITTLE onward lend thy guiding hand
To these dark steps, a little further on;
For yonder bank hath choice of sun or shade:
There I am wont to sit when any chance
Relieves me from my task of servile toil,
Daily in the common prison else enjoin'd me,
Where I, a prisoner chain'd, scarce freely draw
The air imprison'd also, close and damp,
Unwholesome draught: but here I feel amends,
The breath of heaven fresh blowing, pure and sweet,
With day-spring born, here leave me to respire.—
This day a solemn feast the people hold
To Dagon, their sea-idol, and forbid
Laborious works; unwillingly this rest

Their superstition yields me: hence with leave
Retiring from the popular noise, I seek
This unfrequented place to find some ease;
Ease to the body some, none to the mind
From restless thoughts, that, like a deadly swarm
Of hornets arm'd, no sooner found alone,
But rush upon me thronging, and present
Times past, what once I was, and what am now.
O wherefore was my birth from Heaven foretold
Twice by an angel, who at last in sight
Of both my parents all in flames ascended
From off the altar, where an offering burn'd,
As in a fiery column charioting
His godlike presence, and from some great act
Or benefit reveal'd to Abraham's race?
Why was my breeding order'd and prescribed
As of a person separate to God,
Design'd for great exploits; if I must die
Betray'd, captived, and both my eyes put out,
Made of my enemies the scorn and gaze;
To grind in brazen fetters under task
With this heaven-gifted strength? O glorious strength,
Put to the labour of a beast, debased
Lower than bond-slave! Promise was that I
Should Israel from Philistian yoke deliver:
Ask for this great deliverer now, and find him
Eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves,
Himself in bonds under Philistian yoke.
Yet stay, let me not rashly call in doubt
Divine prediction; what if all foretold
Had been fulfill'd but through mine own default,
Whom have I to complain of but myself?
Who this high gift of strength committed to me,

In what part lodged, how easily bereft me,
Under the seal of silence could not keep,
But weakly to a woman must reveal it,
O'ercome with importunity and tears.
O impotence of mind, in body strong!
But what is strength without a double share
Of wisdom? vast, unwieldy, burdensome,
Proudly secure, yet liable to fall
By weakest subtleties, not made to rule,
But to subserve where wisdom bears command!
God, when he gave me strength, to show withal
How slight the gift was, hung it in my hair.
But peace! I must not quarrel with the will
Of highest dispensation, which herein
Haply had ends above my reach to know;
Suffices that to me strength is my bane,
And proves the source of all my miseries:
So many, and so huge, that each apart
Would ask a life to wail; but chief of all,
O loss of sight, of thee I most complain!
Blind among enemies, O worse than chains,
Dungeon, or beggary, or decrepit age!
Light, the prime work of God, to me is extinct,
And all her various objects of delight
Annull'd, which might in part my grief have eased,
Inferior to the vilest now become
Of man or worm: the vilest here excel me;
They creep, yet see; I, dark in light, exposed
To daily fraud, contempt, abuse, and wrong,
Within doors, or without, still as a fool,
In power of others, never in my own;
Scarce half I seem to live, dead more than half.
O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,
Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse

Without all hope of day!
O first created Beam, and thou great Word,
'Let there be light, and light was over all;'
Why am I thus bereaved thy prime decree?
The sun to me is dark
And silent as the moon,
When she deserts the night,
Hid in her vacant interlunar cave.
Since light so necessary is to life,
And almost life itself, if it be true
That light is in the soul,
She all in every part; why was the sight
To such a tender ball as the eye confined,
So obvious and so easy to be quench'd?
And not, as feeling, through all parts diffused,
That she might look at will through every pore?
Then had I not been thus exiled from light,
As in the land of darkness, yet in light,
To live a life half dead, a living death,
And buried; but, O yet more miserable!
Myself my sepulchre, a moving grave;
Buried, yet not exempt,
By privilege of death and burial,
From worst of other evils, pains and wrongs;
But made hereby obnoxious more
To all the miseries of life,
Life in captivity
Among inhuman foes.
But who are these? for with joint pace I hear
The tread of many feet steering this way;
Perhaps my enemies, who come to stare
At my affliction, and perhaps to insult,
Their daily practice to afflict me more.

CHORUS.

Chor. This, this is he; softly awhile,
Let us not break in upon him;
O change beyond report, thought, or belief!
See how he lies at random, carelessly diffused,
With languish'd head unpropp'd,
As one past hope abandon'd,
And by himself given over;
In slavish habit, ill-fitted weeds
O'erworn and soil'd;
Or do my eyes misrepresent? Can this be he,
That heroic, that renown'd,
Irresistible Samson? whom unarm'd
No strength of man, or fiercest wild beast, could withstand;
Who tore the lion, as the lion tears the kid;
Ran on embattled armies clad in iron;
And, weaponless himself,
Made arms ridiculous, useless the forgery
Of brazen shield and spear, the hammer'd cuirass,
Chalybean temper'd steel, and frock of mail
Adamantéan proof?
But safest he who stood aloof,
When insupportably his foot advanced,
In scorn of their proud arms and warlike tools,
Spurn'd them to death by troops. The bold Ascalonite
Fled from his lion ramp; old warriors turn'd
Their plated backs under his heel;
Or groveling, soil'd their crested helmets in the dust.
Then with what trivial weapon came to hand,
The jaw of a dead ass, his sword of bone,

A thousand foreskins fell, the flower of Palestine,
In Rameth-lechi, famous to this day.
Then by main force pull'd up, and on his shoulders
bore
The gates of Azza, post and massy bar,
Up to the hill by Hebron, seat of giants old,
No journey of a sabbath-day, and loaded so;
Like whom the Gentiles feign to bear up Heaven.
Which shall I first bewail,
Thy bondage or lost sight,
Prison within prison
Inseparably dark?
Thou art become (O worst imprisonment!)
The dungeon of thyself; thy soul,
(Which men enjoying sight oft without cause com-
plain)
Imprison'd now indeed,
In real darkness of the body dwells,
Shut up from outward light
To incorporate with gloomy night;
For inward light, alas!
Puts forth no visual beam.
O mirror of our fickle state,
Since man on earth unparallel'd!
The rarer thy example stands,
By how much from the top of wondrous glory,
Strongest of mortal men,
To lowest pitch of abject fortune thou art fallen.
For him I reckon not in high estate
Whom long descent of birth,
Or the sphere of fortune, raises;
But thee whose strength, while virtue was her mat
Might have subdued the earth,
Universally crown'd with highest praises.

Sams. I hear the sound of words; their sense the air
Dissolves unjointed ere it reach my ear.
Chor. He speaks: let us draw nigh. Matchless in might,
The glory late of Israel, now the grief;
We come, thy friends and neighbours not unknown,
From Eshtaol and Zora's fruitful vale,
To visit or bewail thee; or, if better,
Counsel or consolation we may bring,
Salve to thy sores; apt words have power to 'swage
The tumours of a troubled mind,
And are as balm to fester'd wounds.
Sams. Your coming, friends, revives me; for I learn
Now of my own experience, not by talk,
How counterfeit a coin they are who friends
Bear in their superscription (of the most
I would be understood): in prosperous days
They swarm, but in advérse withdraw their head,
Not to be found, though sought. Ye see, O friends,
How many evils have enclosed me round;
Yet that which was the worst now least afflicts me,
Blindness; for had I sight, confused with shame,
How could I once look up, or heave the head,
Who, like a foolish pilot, have shipwreck'd
My vessel trusted to me from above,
Gloriously rigg'd; and for a word, a tear,
Fool! have divulged the secret gift of God
To a deceitful woman! Tell me, friends,
Am I not sung and proverb'd for a fool
In every street? do they not say, how well
Are come upon him his deserts? yet why?
Immeasurable strength they might behold

In me,—of wisdom nothing more than mean:
This with the other should, at least, have pair'd;
These two, proportion'd ill, drove me transverse.

Chor. Tax not divine disposal; wisest men
Have err'd, and by bad women been deceived;
And shall again, pretend they ne'er so wise.
Deject not then so overmuch thyself,
Who hast of sorrow thy full load besides:
Yet truth to say, I oft have heard men wonder
Why thou shouldst wed Philistian women rather
Than of thine own tribe fairer, or as fair,
At least of thy own nation, and as noble.

Sams. The first I saw at Timna, and she pleased
Me, not my parents, that I sought to wed
The daughter of an infidel: they knew not
That what I motion'd was of God; I knew
From intimate impulse, and therefore urged
The marriage on; that by occasion hence
I might begin Israel's deliverance,
The work to which I was divinely call'd.
She proving false, the next I took to wife
(O that I never had! fond wish too late)
Was in the vale of Sorec, Dalilah,
That specious monster, my accomplish'd snare.
I thought it lawful from my former act,
And the same end; still watching to oppress
Israel's oppressors: of what now I suffer
She was not the prime cause, but I myself,
Who, vanquish'd with a peal of words, (O weakness!)
Gave up my fort of silence to a woman.

Chor. In seeking just occasion to provoke
The Philistine, thy country's enemy,
Thou never wast amiss, I bear thee witness:
Yet Israël still serves with all his sons.

Sams. That fault I take not on me, but transfer
On Israel's governors and heads of tribes,
Who, seeing those great acts which God had done
Singly by me against their conquerors,
Acknowledged not, or not at all consider'd,
Deliverance offer'd: I on the other side
Used no ambition to commend my deeds; [doer:
The deeds themselves, though mute, spoke loud the
But they persisted deaf, and would not seem
To count them things worth notice, till at length
Their lords the Philistines with gather'd powers
Enter'd Judea seeking me, who then
Safe to the rock of Etham was retired;
Not flying, but fore-casting in what place
To set upon them, what advantaged best:
Meanwhile the men of Judah, to prevent
The harass of their land, beset me round;
I willingly on some conditions came
Into their hands, and they as gladly yield me
To the uncircumcised a welcome prey,
Bound with two cords; but cords to me were threads
Touch'd with the flame: on their whole host I flew
Unarm'd, and with a trivial weapon fell'd
Their choicest youth; they only lived who fled.
Had Judah that day join'd, or one whole tribe,
They had by this possess'd the towers of Gath,
And lorded over them whom they now serve:
But what more oft, in nations grown corrupt,
And by their vices brought to servitude,
Than to love bondage more than liberty;
Bondage, with ease, than strenuous liberty;
And to despise, or envy, or suspect
Whom God hath of his special favour raised
As their deliverer? if he aught begin,

How frequent to desert him, and at last
To heap ingratitude on worthiest deeds!
Chor. Thy words to my remembrance bring
How Succoth and the fort of Penuel
Their great deliverer contemn'd,
The matchless Gideon, in pursuit
Of Midian and her vanquish'd kings:
And how ingrateful Ephraim
Had dealt with Jephtha, who by argument,
Not worse than by his shield and spear,
Defended Israel from the Ammonite,
Had not his prowess quell'd their pride
In that sore battle, when so many died
Without reprieve, adjudged to death,
For want of well pronouncing Shibboleth.
Sams. Of such examples add me to the roll;
Me easily indeed mine may neglect,
But God's proposed deliverance not so.
Chor. Just are the ways of God,
And justifiable to men;
Unless there be, who think not God at all.
If any be, they walk obscure;
For of such doctrine never was there school,
But the heart of the fool,
And no man therein doctor but himself.
Yet more there be, who doubt his ways not just,
As to his own edicts found contradicting,
Then give the reins to wandering thought,
Regardless of his glory's diminution;
Till by their own perplexities involved,
They ravel more, still less resolved,
But never find self-satisfying solution.
As if they would confine the Interminable,
And tie him to his own prescript,

Who made our laws to bind us, not himself,
And hath full right to exempt
Whom so it pleases him by choice
From national obstriction, without taint
Of sin, or legal debt;
For with his own laws he can best dispense.
He would not else, who never wanted means,
Nor in respect of the enemy just cause,
To set his people free,
Have prompted this heroic Nazarite,
Against his vow of strictest purity,
To seek in marriage that fallacious bride,
Unclean, unchaste.
Down, reason, then; at least vain reasonings down;
Though reason here aver,
That moral verdict quits her of unclean:
Unchaste was subsequent, her stain not his.
But see here comes thy reverend sire
With careful step, locks white as down,
Old Manoah: advise
Forthwith how thou oughtst to receive him.
Sams. Ay me! another inward grief, awaked
With mention of that name, renews the assault.

Enter MANOAH.

Man. Brethren and men of Dan, for such ye seem,
Though in this uncouth place; if old respect,
As I suppose, tow'rds your once gloried friend,
My son, now captive, hither hath inform'd
Your younger feet, while mine cast back with age
Came lagging after; say, if he be here.
Chor. As signal now in low dejected state,
As erst in highest, behold him where he lies.

Man. O miserable change! is this the man,
That invincible Samson, far renown'd,
The dread of Israel's foes, who with a strength
Equivalent to angels walk'd their streets,
None offering fight; who single combatant
Duell'd their armies rank'd in proud array,
Himself an army, now unequal match
To save himself against a coward arm'd
At one spear's length. O ever-failing trust
In mortal strength! and O! what not in man
Deceivable and vain? Nay what thing good
Pray'd for, but often proves our woe, our bane?
I pray'd for children, and thought barrenness
In wedlock a reproach: I gain'd a son,
And such a son as all men hail'd me happy;—
Who would be now a father in my stead?
O wherefore did God grant me my request,
And as a blessing with such pomp adorn'd?
Why are his gifts desirable, to tempt
Our earnest prayers, then, given with solemn hand
As graces, draw a scorpion's tail behind?
For this did the angel twice descend? for this
Ordain'd thy nurture holy, as of a plant
Select and sacred, glorious for a while,
The miracle of men; then in an hour
Ensnared, assaulted, overcome, led bound,
Thy foes' derision, captive, poor, and blind,
Into a dungeon thrust, to work with slaves?
Alas! methinks whom God hath chosen once
To worthiest deeds, if he through frailty err,
He should not so o'erwhelm, and as a thrall
Subject him to so foul indignities,
Be it but for honour's sake of former deeds.

Sams. Appoint not heavenly disposition, father;

Nothing of all these evils hath befallen me
But justly; I myself have brought them on,
Sole author I, sole cause: if aught seem vile,
As vile hath been my folly, who have profaned
The mystery of God given me under pledge
Of vow, and have betray'd it to a woman,
A Canaanite, my faithless enemy.
This well I knew, nor was at all surprised,
But warn'd by oft experience: did not she
Of Timna first betray me, and reveal
The secret wrested from me in her height
Of nuptial love profess'd, carrying it straight
To them who had corrupted her, my spies,
And rivals? in this other was there found
More faith, who also in her prime of love,
Spousal embraces, vitiated with gold,
Though offer'd only, by the scent conceived
Her spurious first-born, treason against me?
Thrice she assay'd with flattering prayers and sighs,
And amorous reproaches, to win from me
My capital secret, in what part my strength
Lay stored, in what part sum'd, that she might know;
Thrice I deluded her, and turn'd to sport
Her importunity, each time perceiving
How openly, and with what impudence
She purposed to betray me, and (which was worse
Than undissembled hate) with what contempt
She sought to make me traitor to myself;
Yet the fourth time, when, mustering all her wiles,
With blandish'd parleys, feminine assaults,
Tongue-batteries, she surceased not, day nor night,
To storm me over-watch'd, and wearied out;
At times when men seek most repose and rest,
I yielded, and unlock'd her all my heart,

Who, with a grain of manhood well resolved,
Might easily have shook off all her snares:
But foul effeminacy held me yoked
Her bond-slave; O indignity, O blot
To honour and religion! servile mind
Rewarded well with servile punishment!
The base degree to which I now am fall'n,
These rags, this grinding is not yet so base
As was my former servitude, ignoble,
Unmanly, ignominious, infamous,
True slavery, and that blindness worse than this,
That saw not how degenerately I served.

Man. I cannot praise thy marriage-choices, son,
Rather approved them not; but thou didst plead
Divine impulsion prompting how thou mightst
Find some occasion to infest our foes.
I state not that; this I am sure, our foes
Found soon occasion thereby to make thee
Their captive, and their triumph; thou the sooner
Temptation found'st, or over-potent charms,
To violate the sacred trust of silence
Deposited within thee; which to have kept
Tacit, was in thy power: true; and thou bear'st
Enough, and more, the burden of that fault;
Bitterly hast thou paid, and still art paying,
That rigid score. A worse thing yet remains:
This day the Philistines a popular feast
Here celebrate in Gaza; and proclaim
Great pomp, and sacrifice, and praises loud
To Dagon, as their god who hath deliver'd
Thee, Samson, bound and blind into their hands,
Them out of thine, who slew'st them many a slain.
So Dagon shall be magnified, and God,
Besides whom is no God, compared with idols,

Disglorified, blasphemed, and had in scorn
By the idolatrous rout amidst their wine;
Which to have come to pass by means of thee,
Samson, of all thy sufferings think the heaviest,
Of all reproach the most with shame that ever
Could have befallen thee and thy father's house.

Sams. Father, I do acknowledge and confess
That I this honour, I this pomp, have brought
To Dagon, and advanced his praises high
Among the heathen round: to God have brought
Dishonour, obloquy, and oped the mouths
Of idolists and atheists: have brought scandal
To Israel, diffidence of God, and doubt
In feeble hearts, propense enough before
To waver, or fall off and join with idols;
Which is my chief affliction, shame, and sorrow,
The anguish of my soul, that suffers not
Mine eye to harbour sleep, or thoughts to rest.
This only hope relieves me, that the strife
With me hath end; all the contest is now
'Twixt God and Dagon; Dagon hath presumed,
Me overthrown, to enter lists with God,
His deity comparing and preferring
Before the God of Abraham. He, be sure,
Will not connive or linger, thus provoked,
But will arise, and his great name assert:
Dagon must stoop, and shall ere long receive
Such a discomfit, as shall quite despoil him
Of all these boasted trophies won on me,
And with confusion blank his worshippers.

Man. With cause this hope relieves thee, and these words
I as a prophecy receive; for God,
Nothing more certain, will not long defer

To vindicate the glory of his Name
Against all competition, nor will long
Endure it doubtful whether God be Lord,
Or Dagon. But for thee what shall be done?
Thou must not, in the meanwhile here forgot,
Lie in this miserable loathsome plight,
Neglected. I already have made way
To some Philistian lords, with whom to treat
About thy ransom: well they may by this
Have satisfied their utmost of revenge
By pains and slaveries, worse than death, inflicted
On thee, who now no more canst do them harm.

Sams. Spare that proposal, father; spare the trouble
Of that solicitation; let me here,
As I deserve, pay on my punishment;
And expiate, if possible, my crime,
Shameful garrulity. To have reveal'd
Secrets of men, the secrets of a friend,
How heinous had the fact been! how deserving
Contempt, and scorn of all, to be excluded
All friendship, and avoided as a blab,
The mark of fool set on his front! but I
God's counsel have not kept, his holy secret
Presumptuously have publish'd, impiously,
Weakly at least, and shamefully; a sin
That Gentiles in their parables condemn
To their abyss and horrid pains confined.

Man. Be penitent, and for thy fault contrite;
But act not in thy own affliction, son:
Repent the sin; but, if the punishment
Thou canst avoid, self-preservation bids;
Or the execution leave to high disposal,
And let another hand, not thine, exact

Thy penal forfeit from thyself: perhaps
God will relent, and quit thee all his debt;
Who ever more approves, and more accepts,
(Best pleased with humble and filial submission)
Him, who, imploring mercy, sues for life,
Than who, self-rigorous, chooses death as due;
Which argues over-just, and self-displeased
For self-offence, more than for God offended.
Reject not then what offer'd means; who knows
But God hath set before us, to return thee
Home to thy country and his sacred house,
Where thou mayst bring thy offerings, to avert
His further ire, with prayers and vows renew'd?

Sams. His pardon I implore; but as for life,
To what end should I seek it? when in strength
All mortals I excell'd, and great in hopes
With youthful courage, and magnanimous thoughts
Of birth from Heaven foretold, and high exploits,
Full of divine instinct, after some proof
Of acts indeed heroic, far beyond
The sons of Anak, famous now and blazed,
Fearless of danger, like a petty god
I walk'd about, admired of all and dreaded,
On hostile ground, none daring my affront.
Then swoll'n with pride, into the snare I fell
Of fair fallacious looks, venereal trains,
Soften'd with pleasure and voluptuous life;
At length to lay my head and hallow'd pledge
Of all my strength in the lascivious lap
Of a deceitful concubine, who shore me
Like a tame wether, all my precious fleece,
Then turn'd me out ridiculous, despoil'd,
Shaven, and disarm'd among mine enemies.

Chor. Desire of wine and all delicious drinks,

Which many a famous warrior overturns,
Thou couldst repress; nor did the dancing ruby
Sparkling, out-pour'd, the flavour, or the smell;
Or taste that cheers the heart of gods and men,
Allure thee from the cool crystalline stream.

Sams. Wherever fountain or fresh current flow'd
Against the eastern ray, translucent, pure
With touch ethereal of Heaven's fiery rod,
I drank, from the clear milky juice allaying
Thirst, and refresh'd: nor envied them the grape
Whose heads that turbulent liquor fills with fumes.

Chor. O madness, to think use of strongest wines
And strongest drinks our chief support of health,
When God, with these forbidden, made choice to rear
His mighty champion, strong above compare,
Whose drink was only from the liquid brook.

Sams. But what avail'd this temperance, not complete
Against another object more enticing?
What boots it at one gate to make defence,
And at another to let in the foe,
Effeminately vanquish'd? by which means,
Now blind, dishearten'd, shamed, dishonour'd quell'd,
To what can I be useful, wherein serve
My nation, and the work from Heaven imposed,
But to sit idle on the household hearth,
A burdenous drone; to visitants a gaze,
Or pitied object, these redundant locks
Robustious to no purpose clustering down,
Vain monument of strength; till length of years
And sedentary numbness craze my limbs
To a contemptible old age obscure?
Here rather let me drudge, and earn my bread;

Till vermin, or the draff of servile food,
Consume me, and oft-invocated death
Hasten the welcome end of all my pains.

Man. Wilt thou then serve the Philistines with that gift
Which was expressly given thee to annoy them?
Better at home lie bed-rid, not only idle,
Inglorious, unemploy'd, with age outworn:
But God, who caused a fountain at thy prayer
From the dry ground to spring, thy thirst to allay
After the brunt of battle, can as easy
Cause light again within thy eyes to spring,
Wherewith to serve him better than thou hast;
And I persuade me so: why else this strength
Miraculous yet remaining in those locks?
His might continues in thee not for nought,
Nor shall his wondrous gifts be frustrate thus.

Sams. All otherwise to me my thoughts portend,
That these dark orbs no more shall treat with light,
Nor the other light of life continue long,
But yield to double darkness nigh at hand:
So much I feel my genial spirits droop,
My hopes all flat, Nature within me seems
In all her functions weary of herself;
My race of glory run, and race of shame,
And I shall shortly be with them that rest.

Man. Believe not these suggestions, which proceed
From anguish of the mind and humours black,
That mingle with thy fancy. I however
Must not omit a father's timely care
To prosecute the means of thy deliverance
By ransom, or how else: meanwhile be calm,
And healing words from these thy friends admit.

[*Exit.*

Sams. O that torment should not be confin
To the body's wounds and sores
With maladies innumerable
In heart, head, breast, and reins;
But must secret passage find
To the inmost mind,
There exercise all his fierce accidents,
And on her purest spirits prey,
As on entrails, joints, and limbs,
With answerable pains, but more intense
Though void of corporeal sense.
My griefs not only pain me
As a lingering disease,
But, finding no redress, ferment and rage;
Nor less than wounds immedicable
Rankle, and fester, and gangrene,
To black mortification.
Thoughts, my tormentors, arm'd with deadly st
Mangle my apprehensive tenderest parts,
Exasperate, exulcerate, and raise
Dire inflammation, which no cooling herb
Or med'cinal liquor can assuage,
Nor breath of vernal air from snowy Alp.
Sleep hath forsook, and given me o'er
To Death's benumbing opium as my only cure
Thence faintings, swoonings of despair,
And sense of Heaven's desertion.
I was his nursling once, and choice delight,
His destined from the womb,
Promised by heavenly message twice descendin
Under his special eye
Abstemious I grew up, and thrived amain;
He led me on to mightiest deeds,
Above the nerve of mortal arm,

Against the uncircumcised, our enemies:
But now hath cast me off as never known,
And to those cruel enemies,
Whom I by his appointment had provoked,
Left me all helpless with the irreparable loss
Of sight, reserved alive to be repeated
The subject of their cruelty or scorn.
Nor am I in the list of them that hope;
Hopeless are all my evils, all remediless:
This one prayer yet remains, might I be heard,
No long petition, speedy death,
The close of all my miseries, and the balm.

Chor. Many are the sayings of the wise,
In ancient and in modern books inroll'd,
Extolling patience as the truest fortitude;
And to the bearing well of all calamities,
All chances incident to man's frail life,
Consolatories writ
With studied argument, and much persuasion sought
Lenient of grief and anxious thought:
But with the afflicted in his pangs their sound
Little prevails, or rather seems a tune
Harsh, and of dissonant mood from his complaint;
Unless he feel within
Some source of consolation from above,
Secret refreshings, that repair his strength,
And fainting spirits uphold.

God of our fathers, what is man!
That thou towards him with hand so various,
Or might I say contrarious,
Temper'st thy providence through his short course,
Not evenly, as thou rulest
The angelic orders, and inferior creatures mute,
Irrational and brute.

Nor do I name of men the common rout,
That, wandering loose about,
Grow up and perish as the summer-fly,
Heads without name no more remember'd;
But such as thou hast solemnly elected,
With gifts and graces eminently adorn'd,
To some great work, thy glory,
And people's safety, which in part they effect:
Yet toward these thus dignified, thou oft,
Amidst their height of noon,
Changest thy countenance, and thy hand, with no regard
Of highest favours past
From thee on them, or them to thee of service.
Nor only dost degrade them, or remit
To life obscured, which were a fair dismission,
But throw'st them lower than thou didst exalt them high,
Unseemly falls in human eye,
Too grievous for the trespass or omission:
Oft leavest them to the hostile sword
Of heathen and profane, their carcasses
To dogs and fowls a prey, or else captíved;
Or to the unjust tribunals, under change of times,
And condemnation of the ingrateful multitude.
If these they 'scape, perhaps in poverty
With sickness and disease thou bow'st them down,
Painful diseases and deform'd,
In crude old age;
Though not disordinate, yet causeless, suffering
The punishment of dissolute days: in fine,
Just, or unjust, alike seem miserable,
For oft alike both come to evil end.
So deal not with this once thy glorious champion,

The image of thy strength, and mighty minister.
What do I beg? how hast thou dealt already?
Behold him in this state calamitous, and turn
His labours, for thou canst, to peaceful end.—
But who is this, what thing of sea or land?
Female of sex it seems,
That so bedeck'd, ornate, and gay,
Comes this way sailing
Like a stately ship
Of Tarsus, bound for the isles
Of Javan or Gadire
With all her bravery on, and tackle trim,
Sails fill'd, and streamers waving,
Courted by all the winds that hold them play;
An amber scent of odorous perfume
Her harbinger, a damsel train behind:
Some rich Philistian matron she may seem;
And now at nearer view, no other certain
Than Dalila thy wife.

Sams. My wife! my traitress: let her not come near me.

Chor. Yet on she moves, now stands and eyes thee fix'd,
About to have spoke; but now, with head declined,
Like a fair flower surcharged with dew, she weeps,
And words address'd seem into tears dissolved,
Wetting the borders of her silken veil:
But now again she makes address to speak.

Enter DALILA.

Dal. With doubtful feet and wavering resolution
I came, still dreading thy displeasure, Samson,
Which to have merited, without excuse,

I cannot but acknowledge; yet, if tears
May expiate, (though the fact more evil drew
In the perverse event than I foresaw)
My penance hath not slacken'd, though my pardon
No way assured. But conjugal affection,
Prevailing over fear and timorous doubt,
Hath led me on, desirous to behold
Once more thy face, and know of thy estate,
If aught in my ability may serve
To lighten what thou suffer'st, and appease
Thy mind with what amends is in my power,
Though late, yet in some part to recompense
My rash, but more unfortunate, misdeed.

Sams. Out, out, Hyena! these are thy wonted arts,
And arts of every woman false like thee,
To break all faith, all vows, deceive, betray,
Then as repentant to submit, beseech,
And reconcilement move with feign'd remorse,
Confess, and promise wonders in her change;
Not truly penitent, but chief to try
Her husband, how far urged his patience bears,
His virtue or weakness which way to assail:
Then with more cautious and instructed skill
Again transgresses, and again submits;
That wisest and best men, full oft beguiled,
With goodness principled not to reject
The penitent, but ever to forgive,
Are drawn to wear out miserable days,
Entangled with a poisonous bosom snake;
If not by quick destruction soon cut off,
As I by thee, to ages an example.

Dal. Yet hear me, Samson; not that I endeavour
To lessen or extenuate my offence,

But that on the other side, if it be weigh'd
By itself, with aggravations not surcharged,
Or else with just allowance counterpoised,
I may, if possible, thy pardon find
The easier towards me, or thy hatred less.
First granting, as I do, it was a weakness
In me, but incident to all our sex,
Curiosity, inquisitive, impórtune
Of secrets, then with like infirmity
To publish them, both common female faults:
Was it not weakness also to make known
For importunity, that is for nought,
Wherein consisted all thy strength and safety?
To what I did thou show'd'st me first the way.
But I to enemies reveal'd, and should not;
Nor shouldst thou have trusted that to woman's
frailty:
Ere I to thee, thou to thyself wast cruel.
Let weakness then with weakness come to parle,
So near related, or the same of kind,
Thine forgive mine; that men may censure thine
The gentler, if severely thou exact not
More strength from me than in thyself was found.
And what if love, which thou interpret'st hate,
The jealousy of love, powerful of sway
In human hearts, nor less in mind towards thee,
Caused what I did? I saw thee mutable
Of fancy, fear'd lest one day thou wouldst leave me
As her at Timna, sought by all means therefore
How to endear, and bold thee to me firmest:
No better way I saw than by impórtuning
To learn thy secrets, get into my power
Thy key of strength and safety: thou wilt say,
Why then reveal'd? I was assured by those

Who tempted me, that nothing was design'd
Against thee but safe custody, and hold:
That made for me; I knew that liberty
Would draw thee forth to perilous enterprises,
While I at home sat full of cares and fears,
Wailing thy absence in my widow'd bed;
Here I should still enjoy thee, day and night,
Mine and love's prisoner, not the Philistines',
Whole to myself, unhazarded abroad,
Fearless at home of partners in my love.
These reasons in love's law have pass'd for good,
Though fond and reasonless to some perhaps;
And love hath oft, well meaning, wrought much woe,
Yet always pity or pardon hath obtain'd.
Be not unlike all others, not austere
As thou art strong, inflexible as steel.
If thou in strength all mortals dost exceed,
In uncompassionate anger do not so.

Sams. How cunningly the sorceress displays
Her own transgressions, to upbraid me mine!
That malice, not repentance, brought thee hither,
By this appears: I gave, thou say'st, the example,
I led the way; bitter reproach, but true;
I to myself was false ere thou to me;
Such pardon therefore as I give my folly,
Take to thy wicked deed; which when thou seest
Impartial, self-severe, inexorable,
Thou wilt renounce thy seeking, and much rather
Confess it feign'd: weakness is thy excuse,
And I believe it; weakness to resist
Philistian gold: if weakness may excuse,
What murderer, what traitor, parricide,
Incestuous, sacrilegious, but may plead it?
All wickedness is weakness: that plea therefore

With God or man will gain thee no remission.
But love constrain'd thee; call it furious rage
To satisfy thy lust: love seeks to have love;
My love how couldst thou hope, who took'st the way
To raise in me inexpiable hate,
Knowing, as needs I must, by thee betray'd?
In vain thou strivest to cover shame with shame,
Or by evasions thy crime uncover'st more.

Dal. Since thou determinest weakness for no plea
In man or woman, though to thy own condemning,
Hear what assaults I had, what snares besides,
What sieges girt me round, ere I consented;
Which might have awed the best resolved of men,
The constantest, to have yielded without blame.
It was not gold, as to my charge thou lay'st,
That wrought with me: thou know'st the magistrates
And princes of my country came in person,
Solicited, commanded, threaten'd, urged,
Adjured by all the bonds of civil duty
And of religion; press'd how just it was,
How honourable, how glorious to entrap
A common enemy, who had destroy'd
Such numbers of our nation: and the priest
Was not behind, but ever at my ear,
Preaching how meritorious with the gods
It would be to ensnare an irreligious
Dishonourer of Dagon: what had I
To oppose against such powerful arguments?
Only my love of thee held long debate,
And combated in silence all these reasons

With hard contést: at length that grounded maxim,
So rife and celebrated in the mouths
Of wisest men, that to the public good
Private respects must yield, with grave authority
Took full possession of me, and prevail'd;
Virtue, as I thought, truth, duty, so enjoining.

Sams. I thought where all thy circling wiles would end;
In feign'd religion, smooth hypocrisy!
But had thy love, still odiously pretended,
Been, as it ought, sincere; it would have taught thee
Far other reasonings, brought forth other deeds.
I, before all the daughters of my tribe
And of my nation, chose thee from among
My enemies, loved thee, as too well thou knew'st;
Too well; unbosom'd all my secrets to thee,
Not out of levity, but overpower'd
By thy request, who could deny thee nothing;
Yet now am judged an enemy. Why then
Didst thou at first receive me for thy husband,
Then, as since then, thy country's foe profess'd?
Being once a wife, for me thou wast to leave
Parents and country; nor was I their subject,
Nor under their protection, but my own;
Thou mine, not theirs: if aught against my life
Thy country sought of thee, it sought unjustly,
Against the law of nature, law of nations;
No more thy country, but an impious crew
Of men conspiring to uphold their state
By worse than hostile deeds, violating the ends
For which our country is a name so dear;

Not therefore to be obey'd. But zeal moved thee!
To please thy gods thou didst it; gods, unable
To acquit themselves and prosecute their foes
But by ungodly deeds, the contradiction
Of their own deity, gods cannot be;
Less therefore to be pleased, obey'd, or fear'd.
These false pretexts and varnish'd colours failing,
Bare in thy guilt, how foul must thou appear?

Dal. In argument with men a woman ever
Goes by the worse, whatever be her cause.

Sams. For want of words no doubt, or lack of breath:
Witness when I was worried with thy peals.

Dal. I was a fool, too rash, and quite mistaken
In what I thought would have succeeded best.
Let me obtain forgiveness of thee, Samson;
Afford me place to show what recompense
Towards thee I intend for what I have misdone,
Misguided; only what remains past cure
Bear not too sensibly, nor still insist
To afflict thyself in vain: though sight be lost,
Life yet hath many solaces, enjoy'd
Where other senses want not their delights
At home in leisure and domestic ease,
Exempt from many a care and chance, to which
Eye-sight exposes daily men abroad.
I to the lords will intercede, not doubting
Their favourable ear, that I may fetch thee
From forth this loathsome prison-house, to abide
With me, where my redoubled love and care
With nursing diligence, to me glad office,
May ever tend about thee to old age
With all things grateful cheer'd, and so supplied,

That, what in me thou hast lost, thou least
shall miss.

Sams. No, no; of my condition take no care;
It fits not; thou and I long since are twain:
Nor think me so unwary or accursed,
To bring my feet again into the snare
Where once I have been caught: I know thy trains,
Though dearly to my cost, thy gins, and toils;
Thy fair enchanted cup, and warbling charms,
No more on me have power; their force is null'd;
So much of adder's wisdom I have learn'd,
To fence my ear against thy sorceries.
If in my flower of youth and strength, when all
men
Loved, honour'd, fear'd me, thou alone couldst
hate me
Thy husband, slight me, sell me, and forego me;
How wouldst thou use me now, blind, and thereby
Deceivable, in most things as a child
Helpless, thence easily contemn'd, and scorn'd,
And last neglected? How would'st thou insult,
When I must live uxorious to thy will
In perfect thraldom! how again betray me,
Bearing my words and doings to the lords
To gloss upon, and, censuring, frown or smile!
This jail I count the house of liberty
To thine, whose doors my feet shall never enter.

Dal. Let me approach at least, and touch thy
hand.

Sams. Not for thy life, lest fierce remembrance
wake
My sudden rage to tear thee joint by joint.
At distance I forgive thee; go with that;

Bewail thy falsehood, and the pious works
It hath brought forth to make thee memorable
Among illustrious women, faithful wives!
Cherish thy hasten'd widowhood with the gold
Of matrimonial treason; so farewell.

Dal. I see thou art implacable, more deaf
To prayers, than winds and seas; yet winds to seas
Are reconciled at length, and sea to shore:
Thy anger, unappeasable, still rages,
Eternal tempest, never to be calm'd.
Why do I humble thus myself, and, suing
For peace, reap nothing but repulse and hate?
Bid go with evil omen, and the brand
Of infamy upon my name denounced?
To mix with thy concernments I desist
Henceforth, nor too much disapprove my own.
Fame, if not double-faced, is double-mouth'd,
And with contrary blast proclaims most deeds;
On both his wings, one black, the other white,
Bears greatest names in his wild aery flight.
My name perhaps among the circumcised
In Dan, in Judah, and the bordering tribes,
To all posterity may stand defamed,
With malediction mention'd, and the blot
Of falsehood most unconjugal traduced.
But in my country, where I most desire,
In Ecron, Gaza, Ashdod, and in Gath,
I shall be named among the famousest
Of women, sung at solemn festivals,
Living and dead recorded, who, to save
Her country from a fierce destroyer, chose
Above the faith of wedlock-bands; my tomb
With odours visited and annual flowers;
Not less renown'd than in mount Ephraim

Jael, who with inhospitable guile
Smote Sisera sleeping, through the temples nail'd.
Nor shall I count it heinous to enjoy
The public marks of honour and reward,
Conferr'd upon me, for the piety
Which to my country I was judged to have shown.
At this whoever envies or repines,
I leave him to his lot, and like my own. [*Exit.*

Chor. She's gone, a manifest serpent by her sting
Discover'd in the end, till now conceal'd.

Sams. So let her go; God sent her to debase me
And aggravate my folly, who committed
To such a viper his most sacred trust
Of secresy, my safety, and my life.

Chor. Yet beauty, though injurious, hath strange power,
After offence returning, to regain
Love once possess'd, nor can be easily
Repulsed without much inward passion felt,
And secret sting of amorous remorse.

Sams. Love-quarrels oft in pleasing concord end;
Not wedlock treachery, endangering life.

Chor. It is not virtue, wisdom, valour, wit,
Strength, comeliness of shape, or amplest merit,
That woman's love can win or long inherit;
But what it is, hard is to say,
Harder to hit,
(Which way soever men refer it)
Much like thy riddle, Samson, in one day
Or seven, though one should musing sit.
If any of these, or all, the Timnian bride
Had not so soon preferr'd
Thy paranymph, worthless to thee compared,

Successor in thy bed,
Nor both so loosely disallied
Their nuptials, nor this last so treacherously
Had shorn the fatal harvest of thy head.
Is it for that such outward ornament
Was lavish'd on their sex, that inward gifts
Were left for haste unfinish'd, judgment scant,
Capacity not raised to apprehend
Or value what is best
In choice, but oftest to affect the wrong?
Or was too much of self-love mix'd,
Of constancy no root infix'd,
That either they love nothing, or not long?
Whate'er it be, to wisest men and best
Seeming at first all heavenly under virgin veil,
Soft, modest, meek, demure,
Once join'd, the contrary she proves, a thorn
Intestine, far within defensive arms
A cleaving mischief, in his way to virtue
Adverse and turbulent, or by her charms
Draws him awry enslaved
With dotage, and his sense depraved
To folly and shameful deeds which ruin ends.
What pilot so expert but needs must wreck,
Imbark'd with such a steers-mate at the helm?
Favour'd of Heaven, who finds
One virtuous, rarely found,
That in domestic good combines:
Happy that house! his way to peace is smooth:
But virtue, which breaks through all opposition,
And all temptation can remove,
Most shines, and most is acceptable above.
Therefore God's universal law
Gave to the man despotic power

Over his female in due awe,
Nor from that right to part an hour,
Smile she or lour:
So shall he least confusion draw
On his whole life, not sway'd
By female usurpation, or dismay'd.
But had we best retire? I see a storm.

Sams. Fair days have oft contracted wind and rain.

Chor. But this another kind of tempest brings.

Sams. Be less abstruse, my riddling days are past.

Chor. Look now for no enchanting voice, nor fear
The bait of honied words; a rougher tongue
Draws hitherward; I know him by his stride,
The giant Harapha of Gath, his look
Haughty, as is his pile high-built and proud.
Comes he in peace? what wind hath blown him hither
I less conjecture than when first I saw
The sumptuous Dalila floating this way:
His habit carries peace, his brow defiance.

Sams. Or peace or not, alike to me he comes.

Chor. His fraught we soon shall know, he now arrives.

Enter HARAPHA.

Har. I come not, Samson, to condole thy chance,
As these perhaps, yet wish it had not been,
Though for no friendly intent. I am of Gath;
Men call me Harapha, of stock renown'd

As Og, or Anak, and the Emims old
That Kiriathaim held; thou know'st me now,
If thou at all art known. Much I have heard
Of thy prodigious might and feats perform'd,
Incredible to me, in this displeased,
That I was never present on the place
Of those encounters, where we might have tried
Each other's force in camp or listed field;
And now am come to see of whom such noise
Hath walk'd about, and each limb to survey,
If thy appearance answer loud report.

Sams. The way to know were not to see but taste.

Har. Dost thou already single me? I thought
Gyves and the mill had tamed thee. O that fortune
Had brought me to the field, where thou art famed
To have wrought such wonders with an ass's jaw!
I should have forced thee soon with other arms,
Or left thy carcass where the ass lay thrown:
So had the glory of prowess been recover'd
To Palestine, won by a Philistine,
From the unforeskin'd race, of whom thou bear'st
The highest name for valiant acts: that honour,
Certain to have won by mortal duel from thee,
I lose, prevented by thy eyes put out.

Sams. Boast not of what thou wouldst have done, but do
What then thou wouldst; thou seest it in thy hand.

Har. To combat with a blind man I disdain,
And thou hast need much washing to be touch'd.

Sams. Such usage as your honourable lords
Afford me, assassinated and betray'd,
Who durst not with their whole united powers,

In fight withstand me single and unarm'd;
Nor in the house with chamber-ambushes
Close banded durst attack me, no, not sleeping,
Till they had hired a woman with their gold
Breaking her marriage faith to circumvent me.
Therefore, without feign'd shifts, let be assign'd
Some narrow place enclosed, where sight may give thee,
Or rather flight, no great advantage on me;
Then put on all thy gorgeous arms, thy helmet
And brigandine of brass, thy broad habergeon,
Vant-brace and greves, and gauntlet; add thy spear,
A weaver's beam, and seven times folded shield;
I only with an oaken staff will meet thee,
And raise such outcries on thy clatter'd iron,
Which long shall not withhold me from thy head,
That in a little time, while breath remains thee,
Thou oft shall wish thyself at Gath, to boast
Again in safety what thou wouldst have done
To Samson, but shalt never see Gath more.

Har. Thou durst not thus disparage glorious arms,
Which greatest heroes have in battle worn,
Their ornament and safety, had not spells
And black enchantments, some magician's art,
Arm'd thee or charm'd thee strong, which thou from Heaven
Feign'dst at thy birth, was given thee in thy hair,
Where strength can least abide, though all thy hairs
Were bristles ranged like those that ridge the back
Of chafed wild boars, or ruffled porcupines.

Sams. I know no spells, use no forbidden arts;
My trust is in the living God, who gave me

At my nativity this strength, diffused
No less through all my sinews, joints, and bones,
Than thine, while I preserved these locks unshorn,
The pledge of my unviolated vow.
For proof hereof, if Dagon be thy god,
Go to his temple, invocate his aid
With solemnest devotion, spread before him
How highly it concerns his glory now
To frustrate and dissolve these magic spells,
Which I to be the power of Israel's God
Avow, and challenge Dagon to the test,
Offering to combat thee his champion bold,
With the utmost of his godhead seconded:
Then thou shalt see, or rather, to thy sorrow,
Soon feel, whose God is strongest, thine or mine.

Har. Presume not on thy God, whate'er he be;
Thee he regards not, owns not, hath cut off
Quite from his people, and deliver'd up
Into thy enemies' hand, permitted them
To put out both thine eyes, and fetter'd send thee
Into the common prison, there to grind
Among the slaves and asses thy comrades,
As good for nothing else; no better service
With those thy boisterous locks, no worthy match
For valour to assail, nor by the sword
Of noble warrior, so to stain his honour,
But by the barber's razor best subdued.

Sams. All these indignities, for such they are
From thine, these evils I deserve, and more,
Acknowledge them from God inflicted on me
Justly, yet despair not of his final pardon,
Whose ear is ever open, and his eye
Gracious to re-admit the suppliant:
In confidence whereof I once again

Defy thee to the trial of mortal fight,
By combat to decide whose God is GOD,
Thine, or whom I with Israel's sons adore.

Har. Fair honour that thou dost thy God, in trusting
He will accept thee to defend his cause,
A murderer, a revolter, and a robber!

Sams. Tongue-doughty giant, how dost thou prove me these?

Har. Is not thy nation subject to our lords?
Their magistrates confess'd it, when they took thee
As a league-breaker, and deliver'd bound
Into our hands: for hadst thou not committed
Notorious murder on those thirty men
At Ascalon, who never did thee harm,
Then like a robber stripp'dst them of their robes?
The Philistines, when thou hadst broke the league,
Went up with armed powers thee only seeking,
To others did no violence nor spoil.

Sams. Among the daughters of the Philistines
I chose a wife, which argued me no foe;
And in your city held my nuptial feast:
But your ill-meaning politician lords,
Under pretence of bridal friends and guests,
Appointed to await me thirty spies,
Who, threatening cruel death, constrain'd the bride
To wring from me, and tell to them, my secret,
That solved the riddle which I had proposed.
When I perceived all set on enmity,
As on my enemies, wherever chanced,
I used hostility, and took their spoil,
To pay my underminers in their coin.
My nation was subjected to your lords;

It was the force of conquest; force with force
Is well ejected when the conquer'd can.
But I, a private person, whom my country
As a league-breaker gave up bound, presumed
Single rebellion, and did hostile acts.
I was no private, but a person raised
With strength sufficient, and command from Heaven,
To free my country; if their servile minds
Me, their deliverer sent, would not receive,
But to their masters gave me up for nought,
The unworthier they; whence to this day they serve.
I was to do my part from Heaven assign'd,
And had perform'd it, if my known offence
Had not disabled me, not all your force:
These shifts refuted, answer thy appellant,
Though by his blindness maim'd for high attempts,
Who now defies thee thrice to single fight,
As a petty enterprise of small enforce.

Har. With thee? a man condemn'd, a slave inroll'd,
Due by the law to capital punishment?
To fight with thee no man of arms will deign.

Sams. Camest thou for this, vain boaster, to survey me,
To descant on my strength, and give thy verdict?
Come nearer; part not hence so slight inform'd;
But take good heed my hand survey not thee.

Har. O Baal-zebub! can my ears unused
Hear these dishonours, and not render death?

Sams. No man withholds thee, nothing from thy hand

Fear I incurable; bring up thy van,
My heels are fetter'd, but my fist is free.
Har. This insolence other kind of answer fits.
Sams. Go, baffled coward! lest I run upon thee,
Though in these chains, bulk without spirit vast,
And with one buffet lay thy structure low,
Or swing thee in the air, then dash thee down
To the hazard of thy brains and shatter'd sides.
Har. By Astaroth, ere long thou shalt lament
These braveries, in irons loaden on thee. [*Exit.*
Chor. His giantship is gone somewhat crest-fallen,
Stalking with less unconscionable strides,
And lower looks, but in a sultry chafe.
Sams. I dread him not, nor all his giant-brood,
Though fame divulge him father of five sons,
All of gigantic size, Goliah chief.
Chor. He will directly to the lords, I fear,
And with malicious counsel stir them up,
Some way or other yet further to afflict thee.
Sams. He must allege some cause, and offer'd fight
Will not dare mention, lest a question rise
Whether he durst accept the offer or not;
And that he durst not, plain enough appear'd.
Much more affliction than already felt
They cannot well impose, nor I sustain;
If they intend advantage of my labours,
The work of many hands, which earns my keeping,
With no small profit daily to my owners.
But come what will, my deadliest foe will prove
My speediest friend, by death to rid me hence;
The worst that he can give, to me the best.

Yet so it may fall out, because their end
Is hate, not help to me, it may with mine
Draw their own ruin who attempt the deed.
Chor. O, how comely it is, and how reviving
To the spirits of just men long oppress'd!
When God into the hands of their deliverer
Puts invincible might
To quell the mighty of the earth, the oppressor,
The brute and boisterous force of violent men,
Hardy and industrious to support
Tyrannic power, but raging to pursue
The righteous and all such as honour truth;
He all their ammunition
And feats of war defeats,
With plain heroic magnitude of mind
And celestial vigour arm'd;
Their armories and magazines contemns,
Renders them useless; while
With winged expedition,
Swift as the lightning glance, he executes
His errand on the wicked, who, surprised,
Lose their defence, distracted and amazed.
But patience is more oft the exercise
Of saints, the trial of their fortitude,
Making them each his own deliverer,
And victor over all
That tyranny or fortune can inflict.
Either of these is in thy lot,
Samson, with might endued
Above the sons of men; but, sight bereaved,
May chance to number thee with those
Whom patience finally must crown.
This idol's day hath been to thee no day of rest,
Labouring thy mind

More than the working day thy hands.
And yet perhaps more trouble is behind,
For I descry this way
Some other tending; in his hand
A sceptre or quaint staff he bears;
Comes on amain, speed in his look.
By his habit I discern him now
A public officer, and now at hand;
His message will be short and voluble.

Enter OFFICER.

Off. Hebrews, the prisoner Samson here I seek.
Chor. His manacles remark him, there he sits.
Off. Samson, to thee our lords thus bid me say;
This day to Dagon is a solemn feast,
With sacrifices, triumph, pomp, and games:
Thy strength they know surpassing human rate,
And now some public proof thereof require
To honour this great feast, and great assembly:
Rise therefore with all speed, and come along,
Where I will see thee hearten'd, and fresh clad,
To appear as fits before the illustrious lords.
Sams. Thou know'st I am an Hebrew, therefore tell them,
Our law forbids at their religious rites
My presence; for that cause I cannot come.
Off. This answer, be assured, will not content them.
Sams. Have they not sword-players, and every sort
Of gymnic artists, wrestlers, riders, runners,
Jugglers, and dancers, antics, mummers, mimics,
But they must pick me out, with shackles tired,

And over-labour'd at their public mill,
To make them sport with blind activity?
Do they not seek occasion of new quarrels
On my refusal to distress me more,
Or make a game of my calamities?
Return the way thou camest, I will not come.

Off. Regard thyself; this will offend them highly.

Sams. Myself? my conscience, and internal peace.
Can they think me so broken, so debased
With corporal servitude, that my mind ever
Will condescend to such absurd commands?
Although their drudge, to be their fool or jester,
And in my midst of sorrow and heart-grief
To show them feats, and play before their god,
The worst of all indignities, yet on me
Join'd with extreme contempt? I will not come.

Off. My message was imposed on me with speed,
Brooks no delay: is this thy resolution?

Sams. So take it with what speed thy message needs.

Off. I am sorry what this stoutness will produce.
[*Exit.*

Sams. Perhaps thou shalt have cause to sorrow indeed.

Chor. Consider, Samson; matters now are strain'd
Up to the height, whether to hold or break:—
He's gone, and who knows how he may report
Thy words by adding fuel to the flame?
Expect another message more imperious,
More lordly thundering than thou well wilt bear.

Sams. Shall I abuse this consecrated gift
Of strength, again returning with my hair
After my great transgression, so requite

Favour renew'd, and add a greater sin
By prostituting holy things to idols?
A Nazarite, in place abominable
Vaunting my strength in honour to their Dagon!
Besides, how vile, contemptible, ridiculous,
What act more execrably unclean, profane?

Chor. Yet with this strength thou servest the Philistines,
Idolatrous, uncircumcised, unclean.

Sams. Not in their idol-worship, but by labour
Honest and lawful, to deserve my food
Of those who have me in their civil power.

Chor. Where the heart joins not, outward acts defile not.

Sams. Where outward force constrains, the sentence holds.
But who constrains me to the temple of Dagon,
Not dragging? The Philistian lords command.
Commands are no constraints. If I obey them,
I do it freely, venturing to displease
God for the fear of man; and man prefer,
Set God behind: which in his jealousy
Shall never, unrepented, find forgiveness.
Yet that he may dispense with me, or thee,
Present in temples, at idolatrous rites
For some important cause, thou need'st not doubt.

Chor. How thou wilt here come off surmounts my reach.

Sams. Be of good courage; I begin to feel
Some rousing motions in me, which dispose
To something extraordinary my thoughts.
I with this messenger will go along,
Nothing to do, be sure, that may dishonour
Our law, or stain my vow of Nazarite.

If there be aught of presage in the mind,
This day will be remarkable in my life,
By some great act, or of my days the last.

Chor. In time thou hast resolved; the man returns.

Off. Samson, this second message from our lords
To thee I am bid say. Art thou our slave,
Our captive, at the public mill our drudge,
And darest thou at our sending and command
Dispute thy coming? come without delay;
Or we shall find such engines to assail
And hamper thee, as thou shalt come of force,
Though thou wert firmlier fasten'd than a rock.

Sams. I could be well content to try their art,
Which to no few of them would prove pernicious.
Yet, knowing their advantages too many,
Because they shall not trail me through their streets
Like a wild beast, I am content to go.
Masters' commands come with a power resistless
To such as owe them absolute subjection;
And for a life who will not change his purpose?
(So mutable are all the ways of men)
Yet this be sure, in nothing to comply
Scandalous or forbidden in our law.

Off. I praise thy resolution: doff these links:
By this compliance thou wilt win the lords
To favour, and perhaps to set thee free.

Sams. Brethren, farewell; your company along
I will not wish, lest it perhaps offend them
To see me girt with friends; and how the sight
Of me, as of a common enemy,
So dreaded once, may now exasperate them,
I know not: lords are lordliest in their wine;
And the well feasted priest then soonest fired

With zeal, if aught religion seem concern'd;
No less the people, on their holy days,
Impetuous, insolent, unquenchable:
Happen what may, of me expect to hear
Nothing dishonourable, impure, unworthy
Our God, our Law, my Nation, or myself,
The last of me or no I cannot warrant. [*Exit.*

Chor. Go, and the Holy One
Of Israel be thy guide
To what may serve his glory best, and spread his name
Great among the Heathen round;
Send thee the Angel of thy birth, to stand
Fast by thy side, who from thy father's field
Rode up in flames after his message told
Of thy conception, and be now a shield
Of fire; that Spirit, that first rushed on thee
In the camp of Dan,
Be efficacious in thee now at need.
For never was from Heaven imparted
Measure of strength so great to mortal seed,
As in thy wondrous actions hath been seen.—
But wherefore comes old Manoah in such haste
With youthful steps? much livelier than erewhile
He seems; supposing here to find his son,
Or of him bringing to us some glad news?

Enter MANOAH.

Man. Peace with you, brethren; my inducement hither
Was not at present here to find my son,
By order of the lords now parted hence
To come and play before them at their feast.

I heard all as I came, the city rings,
And numbers thither flock: I had no will,
Lest I should see him forced to things unseemly.
But that, which moved my coming now, was chiefly
To give ye part with me what hope I have
With good success to work his liberty.

Chor. That hope would much rejoice us to partake
With thee; say, reverend sire, we thirst to hear.

Man. I have attempted one by one the lords
Either at home, or through the high street passing
With supplication prone and father's tears,
To accept of ransom for my son their prisoner.
Some much averse I found and wondrous harsh,
Contemptuous, proud, set on revenge and spite;
That part most reverenced Dagon and his priests:
Others more moderate seeming, but their aim
Private reward, for which both god and state
They easily would set to sale: a third,
More generous far and civil, who confess'd
They had enough revenged; having reduced
Their foe to misery beneath their fears,
The rest was magnanimity to remit,
If some convenient ransom were proposed:—
What noise or shout was that? it tore the sky.

Chor. Doubtless the people shouting to behold
Their once great dread, captive and blind before them,
Or at some proof of strength before them shown.

Man. His ransom, if my whole inheritance
May compass it, shall willingly be paid
And number'd down: much rather I shall choose
To live the poorest in my tribe, than richest,
And he in that calamitous prison left.

No, I am fix'd not to part hence without him.
For his redemption all my patrimony,
If need be, I am ready to forego
And quit: not wanting him, I shall want nothing.

Chor. Fathers are wont to lay up for their sons,
Thou for thy son art bent to lay out all;
Sons wont to nurse their parents in old age,
Thou in old age carest how to nurse thy son,
Made older than thy age through eye-sight lost.

Man. It shall be my delight to tend his eyes,
And view him sitting in the house, ennobled
With all those high exploits by him achieved,
And on his shoulders waving down those locks
That of a nation arm'd the strength contain'd:
And I persuade me, God had not permitted
His strength again to grow up with his hair,
Garrison'd round about him like a camp
Of faithful soldiery, were not his purpose
To use him further yet in some great service;
Not to sit idle with so great a gift
Useless, and thence ridiculous about him.
And since his strength with eye-sight was not lost,
God will restore him eye-sight to his strength.

Chor. Thy hopes are not ill founded, nor seem vain
Of his delivery, and thy joy thereon
Conceived, agreeable to a father's love;
In both which we, as next, participate.

Man. I know your friendly minds and—O what noise!—
Mercy of Heaven! what hideous noise was that,
Horribly loud, unlike the former shout?

Chor. Noise call you it, or universal groan,
As if the whole inhabitation perish'd?

Blood, death, and deathful deeds, are in that noise,
Ruin, destruction, at the utmost point.

Man. Of ruin indeed; methought I heard the noise:
O! it continues; they have slain my son.

Chor. Thy son is rather slaying them; that outcry
From slaughter of one foe could not ascend.

Man. Some dismal accident it needs must be:
What shall we do, stay here, or run and see?

Chor. Best keep together here, lest running thither,
We unawares run into danger's mouth.
This evil on the Philistines is fallen,
From whom could else a general cry be heard?
The sufferers then will scarce molest us here;
From other hands we need not much to fear.
What if, his eye-sight (for to Israel's God
Nothing is hard) by miracle restored,
He now be dealing dole among his foes,
And over heaps of slaughter'd walk his way?

Man. That were a joy presumptuous to be thought.

Chor. Yet God hath wrought things as incredible
For his people of old; what hinders now?

Man. He can, I know, but doubt to think he will;
Yet hope would fain subscribe, and tempts belief.
A little stay will bring some notice hither.

Chor. Of good or bad so great, of bad the sooner;
For evil news rides post, while good news baits.
And to our wish I see one hither speeding,
An Hebrew, as I guess, and of our tribe.

Enter MESSENGER.

Mess. O whither shall I run, or which way fly
The sight of this so horrid spectacle,
Which erst my eyes beheld, and yet behold?
For dire imagination still pursues me.
But providence or instinct of nature seems,
Or reason though disturb'd, and scarce consulted,
To have guided me aright, I know not how,
To thee first, reverend Manoah, and to these
My countrymen; whom here I knew remaining,
As at some distance from the place of horror,
So in the sad event too much concern'd.

Man. The accident was loud, and here before thee
With rueful cry, yet what it was we hear not;
No preface needs, thou seest we long to know.

Mess. It would burst forth, but I recover breath
And sense distract, to know well what I utter.

Man. Tell us the sum, the circumstance defer.

Mess. Gaza yet stands, but all her sons are fallen,
All in a moment overwhelm'd and fallen.

Man. Sad, but thou know'st to Israelites not saddest
The desolation of a hostile city.

Mess. Feed on that first; there may in grief be surfeit.

Man. Relate by whom.

Mess. By Samson.

Man. That still lessens
The sorrow, and converts it nigh to joy.

Mess. Ah! Manoah, I refrain too suddenly
To utter what will come at last too soon;
Lest evil tidings, with too rude irruption

Hitting thy aged ear, should pierce too deep.

Man. Suspense in news is torture, speak them out.

Mess. Take then the worst in brief, Samson is dead!

Man. The worst indeed; O all my hopes defeated
To free him hence! but death, who sets all free,
Hath paid his ransom now and full discharge.
What windy joy this day had I conceived,
Hopeful of his delivery, which now proves
Abortive as the first-born bloom of spring
Nipt with the lagging rear of winter's frost!
Yet ere I give the reins to grief, say first,
How died he? death to life is crown or shame.
All by him fell, thou sayst; by whom fell he?
What glorious hand gave Samson his death's wound?

Mess. Unwounded of his enemies he fell.

Man. Wearied with slaughter then, or how? explain.

Mess. By his own hands.

Man. Self-violence? what cause
Brought him so soon at variance with himself
Among his foes?

Mess. Inevitable cause:
At once both to destroy, and be destroy'd.
The edifice, where all were met to see him,
Upon their heads and on his own he pull'd.

Man. O lastly over-strong against thyself!
A dreadful way thou took'st to thy revenge.
More than enough we know; but while things yet
Are in confusion, give us, if thou canst,
Eye-witness of what first or last was done,
Relation more particular and distinct.

Mess. Occasions drew me early to this city;
And, as the gates I enter'd with sun-rise,
The morning trumpets festival proclaim'd
Through each high street: little I had dispatch'd,
When all abroad was rumour'd that this day
Samson should be brought forth, to show the people
Proof of his mighty strength in feats and games:
I sorrow'd at his captive state, but minded
Not to be absent at that spectacle.
The building was a spacious theatre
Half-round, on two main pillars vaulted high,
With seats where all the lords, and each degree
Of sort, might sit in order to behold;
The other side was open, where the throng
On banks and scaffolds under sky might stand;
I among these aloof obscurely stood.
The feast and noon grew high, and sacrifice
Had fill'd their hearts with mirth, high cheer, and wine,
When to their sports they turn'd. Immediately
Was Samson as a public servant brought,
In their state livery clad; before him pipes
And timbrels, on each side went armed guards,
Both horse and foot, before him and behind
Archers and slingers, cataphracts and spears.
At sight of him the people with a shout
Rifted the air, clamouring their god with praise,
Who had made their dreadful enemy their thrall.
He patient, but undaunted, where they led him,
Came to the place; and what was set before him,
Which without help of eye might be assay'd,
To heave, pull, draw, or break, he still perform'd
All with incredible, stupendous force;
None daring to appear antagonist.

At length for intermission sake they led him
Between the pillars; he his guide requested
(For so from such as nearer stood we heard),
As over-tired, to let him lean awhile
With both his arms on those two massy pillars
That to the arched roof gave main support.
He, unsuspicious, led him; which when Samson
Felt in his arms, with head awhile inclined,
And eyes fast fix'd he stood, as one who pray'd,
Or some great matter in his mind revolved:
At last with head erect thus cried aloud:
'Hitherto, Lords, what your commands imposed
I have perform'd, as reason was, obeying,
Not without wonder or delight beheld:
Now of my own accord such other trial
I mean to show you of my strength, yet greater,
As with amaze shall strike all who behold.'
This utter'd, straining all his nerves he bow'd,
As with the force of winds and waters pent,
When mountains tremble, those two massy pillars
With horrible convulsion to and fro
He tugg'd, he shook, till down they came, and drew
The whole roof after them, with burst of thunder
Upon the heads of all who sat beneath:
Lords, ladies, captains, counsellors, or priests,
Their choice nobility and flower, not only
Of this but each Philistian city round,
Met from all parts to solemnize this feast.
Samson, with these immix'd, inevitably
Pull'd down the same destruction on himself:
The vulgar only 'scaped who stood without.

Chor. O dearly-bought revenge, yet glorious!
Living or dying thou hast fulfill'd
The work for which thou wast foretold

To Israel, and now liest victorious
Among thy slain self-kill'd,
Not willingly, but tangled in the fold
Of dire necessity, whose law in death conjoin'd
Thee with thy slaughter'd foes, in number more
Than all thy life hath slain before.

1. *Semichor.* While their hearts were jocund and sublime,
Drunk with idolatry, drunk with wine,
And fat regorged of bulls and goats,
Chaunting their idol, and preferring
Before our living Dread who dwells
In Silo, his bright sanctuary;
Among them he a spirit of frenzy sent,
Who hurt their minds,
And urged them on with mad desire
To call in haste for their destroyer:
They, only set on sport and play,
Unweetingly importuned
Their own destruction to come speedy upon them.
So fond are mortal men
Fallen into wrath divine,
As their own ruin on themselves to invite,
Insensate left, or to sense reprobate,
And with blindness internal struck.

2. *Semichor.* But he, though blind of sight,
Despised and thought extinguish'd quite,
With inward eyes illuminated,
His fiery virtue roused
From under ashes into sudden flame,
And as an evening dragon came,
Assailant on the perched roosts
And nests in order ranged
Of tame villatic fowl; but as an eagle

His cloudless thunder bolted on their heads.
So Virtue, given for lost,
Depress'd and overthrown, as seem'd,
Like that self-begotten bird
In the Arabian woods emboss'd,
That no second knows nor third,
And lay erewhile a holocaust,
From out her ashy womb now teem'd,
Revives, reflourishes, then vigorous most
When most unactive deem'd;
And, though her body die, her fame survives
A secular bird ages of lives.

Man. Come, come; no time for lamentation now,
Nor much more cause; Samson hath quit himself
Like Samson, and heroicly hath finish'd
A life heroic, on his enemies
Fully revenged, hath left them years of mourning,
And lamentation to the sons of Caphtor
Through all Philistian bounds; to Israel
Honour hath left, and freedom, let but them
Find courage to lay hold on this occasion:
To himself and father's house eternal fame;
And, which is best and happiest yet, all this
With God not parted from him, as was fear'd,
But favouring and assisting to the end.
Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
Or knock the breast; no weakness, no contempt,
Dispraise, or blame; nothing but well and fair,
And what may quiet us in a death so noble.
Let us go find the body where it lies
Soak'd in his enemies' blood; and from the stream
With lavers pure, and cleansing herbs, wash off
The clotted gore. I, with what speed the while,
(Gaza is not in plight to say us nay)

Will send for all my kindred, all my friends,
To fetch him hence, and solemnly attend
With silent obsequy, and funeral train,
Home to his father's house: there will I build him
A monument, and plant it round with shade
Of laurel ever green, and branching palm,
With all his trophies hung, and acts inroll'd
In copious legend, or sweet lyric song.
Thither shall all the valiant youth resort,
And from his memory inflame their breasts
To matchless valour, and adventures high:
The virgins also shall, on feastful days,
Visit his tomb with flowers; only bewailing
His lot unfortunate in nuptial choice,
From whence captivity and loss of eyes.

Chor. All is best, though we oft doubt
What the unsearchable dispose
Of highest Wisdom brings about,
And ever best found in the close.
Oft he seems to hide his face,
But unexpectedly returns,
And to his faithful champion hath in place
Bore witness gloriously; whence Gaza mourns,
And all that band them to resist
His uncontrollable intent;
His servants he, with new acquist
Of true experience, from this great event
With peace and consolation hath dismiss'd,
And calm of mind, all passion spent,

MILTON.

L'ALLEGRO,

IL PENSEROSO,

ETC.

MILTON.

L'ALLEGRO.

IL PENSEROSO.



Hence, loathed Melancholy.



MILTON.

L'ALLEGRO.

HENCE, loathed Melancholy,
Of Cerberus and blackest Midnight born,
In Stygian cave forlorn, [unholy!
'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights
Find out some uncouth cell, [wings,
Where brooding Darkness spreads his jealous
And the night-raven sings;
There, under ebon shades, and low-brow'd rocks,
As ragged as thy locks,
In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell.
But come, thou goddess fair and free,
In heaven yclep'd Euphrosyne,
And by men heart-easing Mirth;
Whom lovely Venus, at a birth,
With two sister Graces more,
To ivy-crowned Bacchus bore:
Or whether (as some sages sing)
The frolic wind, that breathes the spring,
Zephyr, with Aurora playing,
As he met her once a-Maying;
There on beds of violets blue,
And fresh-blown roses wash'd in dew,

Fill'd her with thee, a daughter fair,
So buxom, blithe, and debonaire.
  Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee
Jest and youthful Jollity,
Quips, and cranks, and wanton wiles,
Nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek;
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides.
Come, and trip it as you go,
On the light fantastic toe;
And in thy right hand lead with thee
The mountain-nymph, sweet Liberty;
And if I give thee honour due,
Mirth, admit me of thy crew,
To live with her, and live with thee,
In unreproved pleasures free;
To hear the lark begin his flight,
And singing startle the dull night,
From his watch-tower in the skies,
Till the dappled dawn doth rise;
Then to come, in spite of sorrow,
And at my window bid good-morrow,
Through the sweet-brier, or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine:
While the cock, with lively din,
Scatters the rear of darkness thin,
And to the stack, or the barn-door,
Stoutly struts his dames before:
Oft listening how the hounds and horn
Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,
From the side of some hoar hill,
Through the high wood echoing shrill:

Sometime walking, not unseen,
By edge-row elms, on hillocks green,
Right against the eastern gate,
Where the great Sun begins his state,
Robed in flames and amber light,
The clouds in thousand liveries dight;
While the ploughman, near at hand,
Whistles o'er the furrow'd land,
And the milk-maid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe,
And every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale.
Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,
Whilst the landscape round it measures;
Russet lawns, and fallows gray,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray;
Mountains, on whose barren breast
The labouring clouds do often rest;
Meadows trim with daisies pied,
Shallow brooks, and rivers wide:
Towers and battlements it sees
Bosom'd high in tufted trees,
Where perhaps some beauty lies,
The Cynosure of neighbouring eyes.
Hard by, a cottage-chimney smokes,
From betwixt two aged oaks,
Where Corydon and Thyrsis, met,
Are at their savoury dinner set
Of herbs, and other country messes,
Which the neat-handed Phillis dresses;
And then in haste her bower she leaves,
With Thestylis to bind the sheaves;
Or, if the earlier season lead,
To the tann'd haycock in the mead.

Sometimes with secure delight
The upland hamlets will invite,
When the merry bells ring round,
And the jocund rebecks sound
To many a youth, and many a maid,
Dancing in the chequer'd shade;
And young and old come forth to play
On a sunshine holiday,
Till the livelong daylight fail:
Then to the spicy nut-brown ale,
With stories told of many a feat,
How faëry Mab the junkets ate:
She was pinch'd and pull'd, she said;
And he, by friar's lantern led,
Tells how the drudging goblin sweat
To earn his cream-bowl duly set,
When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,
His shadowy flail hath thresh'd the corn
That ten day-labourers could not end;
Then lies him down the lubbar-fiend,
And, stretch'd out all the chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength;
And crop-full out of doors he flings
Ere the first cock his matin rings.
Thus done the tales, to bed they creep,
By whispering winds soon lull'd asleep.
Tower'd cities please us then,
And the busy hum of men,
Where throngs of knights and barons bold,
In weeds of peace, high triumphs hold,
With store of ladies, whose bright eyes
Rain influence, and judge the prize
Of wit, or arms, while both contend
To win her grace, whom all commend.

There let Hymen oft appear
In saffron robe, with taper clear,
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,
With mask and antique pageantry;
Such sights as youthful poets dream
On summer eves by haunted stream.
Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Jonson's learned sock be on;
Or sweetest Shakspeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild.
And ever, against eating cares,
Lap me in soft Lydian airs,
Married to immortal verse;
Such as the meeting soul may pierce,
In notes, with many a winding bout
Of linked sweetness long drawn out,
With wanton heed and giddy cunning;
The melting voice through mazes running,
Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony;
That Orpheus' self may heave his head
From golden slumber on a bed
Of heap'd Elysian flowers, and hear
Such strains as would have won the ear
Of Pluto, to have quite set free
His half-regain'd Eurydice.
These delights, if thou canst give,
Mirth, with thee I mean to live.

IL PENSEROSO.

HENCE, vain deluding Joys,
The brood of Folly without father bred!
How little you bested,
Or fill the fixed mind with all your toys!
Dwell in some idle brain,
And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,
As thick and numberless
As the gay motes that people the sunbeams;
Or likest hovering dreams,
The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train.
But hail, thou goddess, sage and holy,
Hail, divinest Melancholy!
Whose saintly visage is too bright
To hit the sense of human sight,
And therefore to our weaker view
O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue;
Black, but such as in esteem
Prince Memnon's sister might beseem,
Or that starr'd Ethiop queen, that strove
To set her beauty's praise above
The sea-nymphs, and their powers offended;
Yet thou art higher far descended:
Thee bright-hair'd Vesta, long of yore,
To solitary Saturn bore;
His daughter she; in Saturn's reign
Such mixture was not held a stain:
Oft in glimmering bowers and glades
He met her, and in secret shades

Of woody Ida's inmost grove,
Whilst yet there was no fear of Jove.
Come, pensive nun, devout and pure,
Sober, stedfast, and demure,
All in a robe of darkest grain,
Flowing with majestic train,
And sable stole of Cyprus lawn,
Over thy decent shoulders drawn.
Come, but keep thy wonted state,
With even step, and musing gait;
And looks commercing with the skies,
Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes.
There, held in holy passion still,
Forget thyself to marble, till
With a sad leaden downward cast
Thou fix them on the earth as fast;
And join with thee calm Peace, and Quiet,
Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet,
And hears the Muses in a ring
Aye round about Jove's altar sing;
And add to these retired Leisure,
That in trim gardens takes his pleasure:
But first, and chiefest, with thee bring
Him that yon soars on golden wing,
Guiding the fiery-wheeled throne,
The cherub Contemplation;
And the mute Silence hiss'd along,
'Less Philomel will deign a song,
In her sweetest, saddest plight,
Smoothing the rugged brow of Night,
While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke
Gently o'er the accustom'd oak:
Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,
Most musical, most melancholy!

Thee, chantress, oft, the woods among,
I woo, to hear thy even-song;
And, missing thee, I walk unseen
On the dry smooth-shaven green,
To behold the wandering moon,
Riding near her highest noon,
Like one that had been led astray
Through the heaven's wide pathless way;
And oft, as if her head she bow'd,
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.
Oft, on a plat of rising ground,
I hear the far-off curfeu sound,
Over some wide-water'd shore,
Swinging slow with sullen roar:
Or if the air will not permit,
Some still, removed place will fit,
Where glowing embers through the room
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom;
Far from all resort of mirth,
Save the cricket on the hearth,
Or the bellman's drowsy charm,
To bless the doors from nightly harm.
Or let my lamp at midnight hour
Be seen in some high lonely tower,
Where I may oft outwatch the bear,
With thrice-great Hermes, or unsphere
The spirit of Plato, to unfold
What worlds or what vast regions hold
The immortal mind, that hath forsook
Her mansion in this fleshly nook:
And of those demons that are found
In fire, air, flood, or under ground,
Whose power hath a true consent
With planet, or with element.



Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy
In sceptred pall come sweeping by,
Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,
Or the tale of Troy divine;
Or what, though rare, of later age
Ennobled hath the buskin'd stage.
But, O sad virgin, that thy power
Might raise Musæus from his bower!
Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing
Such notes, as, warbled to the string,
Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
And made hell grant what love did seek!
Or call up him that left half-told
The story of Cambuscan bold,
Of Camball, and of Algarsife,
And who had Canace to wife,
That own'd the virtuous ring and glass;
And of the wondrous horse of brass,
On which the Tartar king did ride:
And if aught else great bards beside
In sage and solemn tunes have sung,
Of turneys, and of trophies hung,
Of forests, and enchantments drear,
Where more is meant than meets the ear.
Thus, Night, oft see me in thy pale career,
Till civil-suited Morn appear;
Not trick'd and frounced, as she was wont
With the Attic boy to hunt,
But kercheft in a comely cloud,
While rocking winds are piping loud,
Or usher'd with a shower still,
When the gust hath blown his fill,
Ending on the rustling leaves,
With minute drops from off the eaves:

And, when the sun begins to fling
His flaring beams, me, goddess, bring
To arched walks of twilight groves,
And shadows brown, that Sylvan loves,
Of pine, or monumental oak,
Where the rude axe, with heaved stroke,
Was never heard the nymphs to daunt,
Or fright them from their hallow'd haunt.
There in close covert by some brook,
Where no profaner eye may look,
Hide me from day's garish eye,
While the bee with honied thigh,
That at her flowery work doth sing,
And the waters murmuring,
With such consort as they keep,
Entice the dewy-feather'd Sleep;
And let some strange mysterious dream
Wave at his wings in aery stream
Of lively portraiture display'd,
Softly on my eyelids laid,
And as I wake sweet music breathe
Above, about, or underneath,
Sent by some spirit to mortals good,
Or the unseen genius of the wood.
  But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloisters pale,
And love the high-embowed roof,
With antique pillars massy proof,
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light:
There let the pealing organ blow
To the full-voiced quire below,
In service high, and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,

Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all heaven before mine eyes!
And may at last my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage,
The hairy gown and mossy cell,
Where I may sit and rightly spell
Of every star that heaven doth shew,
And every herb that sips the dew;
Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.
These pleasures, Melancholy, give,
And I with thee will choose to live.

LYCIDAS.

In this Monody the author bewails a learned friend, Edward King, Esq. the son of Sir John King, knight, secretary for Ireland. He was sailing from Chester to Ireland, on a visit to his friends in that country, when in calm weather, not far from the English coast, the ship struck upon a rock, and suddenly sunk to the bottom with all that were on board, August 10, 1637. Mr. King was a fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge.

YET once more, O ye laurels, and once more
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude;
And, with forced fingers rude,
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year:
Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear,
Compels me to disturb your season due:
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer:
Who would not sing for Lycidas? He knew
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.
He must not float upon his watery bier
Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,
Without the meed of some melodious tear.
Begin then, Sisters of the sacred well,
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring;
Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.

Hence with denial vain, and coy excuse;
So may some gentle Muse
With lucky words favour my destined urn;
And, as he passes, turn,
And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud.
For we were nursed upon the self-same hill,
Fed the same flock by fountain, shade, and rill.
Together both, ere the high lawns appear'd
Under the opening eyelids of the morn,
We drove a-field, and both together heard
What time the gray-fly winds her sultry horn,
Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night,
Oft till the star, that rose, at evening, bright,
Toward heaven's descent had sloped his westering wheel.
Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,
Temper'd to the oaten flute;
Rough Satyrs danced, and Fauns with cloven heel
From the glad sound would not be absent long;
And old Damœtas loved to hear our song.
But, O the heavy change, now thou art gone,
Now thou art gone, and never must return!
Thee, shepherd, thee the woods, and desert caves,
With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown,
And all their echoes mourn:
The willows, and the hazel copses green,
Shall now no more be seen
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.
As killing as the canker to the rose,
Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,
Or frost to flowers, that their gay wardrobe wear,
When first the white-thorn blows;—
Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherds' ear.

Where were ye, nymphs, when the remorseless deep
Closed o'er the head of your loved Lycidas?
For neither were ye playing on the steep,
Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie,
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona[1] high,
Nor yet where Deva[2] spreads her wizard stream:
Ay me, I fondly dream!
Had ye been there—for what could that have done?
What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,
The Muse herself, for her enchanting son,
Whom universal Nature did lament,
When by the rout that made the hideous roar,
His gory visage down the stream was sent,
Down the swift Hebrus, to the Lesbian shore?
Alas! what boots it with incessant care
To tend the homely, slighted, shepherd's trade,
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?
Were it not better done, as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?
Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
(That last infirmity of noble mind)
To scorn delights, and live laborious days;
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with the abhorred shears,
And slits the thin-spun life. 'But not the praise,'
Phœbus replied, and touch'd my trembling ears;
'Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistering foil,
Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies;
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,

And perfect witness of all-judging Jove:
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed.'
O fountain Arethuse, and thou honour'd flood,
Smooth-sliding Mincius,[3] crown'd with vocal reeds!
That strain I heard was of a higher mood:
But now my oat proceeds,
And listens to the herald of the sea
That came in Neptune's plea;
He ask'd the waves, and ask'd the felon winds,
What hard mishap hath doom'd this gentle swain?
And question'd every gust of rugged winds
That blows from off each beaked promontory:
They knew not of his story;
And sage Hippotades[4] their answer brings,
That not a blast was from his dungeon stray'd;
The air was calm, and on the level brine
Sleek Panope[5] with all her sisters play'd.
It was that fatal and perfidious bark,
Built in the eclipse, and rigg'd with curses dark,
That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.
Next Camus, reverend sire, went footing slow,
His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge,
Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge
Like to that sanguine flower inscribed with woe.
'Ah! who hath reft,' quoth he, 'my dearest pledge?'
Last came, and last did go,
The pilot[6] of the Galilean lake:
Two massy keys he bore of metals twain;
(The golden opes, the iron shuts amain)
He shook'd his mitred locks, and stern bespake:
'How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,
Enow of such, as for their bellies' sake
Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold!

Of other care they little reckoning make,
Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,
And shove away the worthy bidden guest; [hold
Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to
A sheep-hook, or have learn'd aught else the least
That to the faithful herdsman's art belongs! [sped;
What recks it them? What need they? They are
And, when they list, their lean and flashy songs
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw:
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,
But, swoln with wind, and the rank mist they draw,
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread:
Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw
Daily devours apace, and nothing said:
But that two-handed engine at the door
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more.'

Return, Alpheus, the dread voice is pass'd
That shrunk thy streams; return, Sicilian Muse,
And call the vales, and bid them hither cast
Their bells, and flowerets of a thousand hues.
Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use
Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
On whose fresh lap the swart-star sparely looks;
Throw hither all your quaint enamell'd eyes,
That on the green turf suck the honied showers,
And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.
Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,
The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
The white pink, and the pansy freak'd with jet,
The glowing violet,
The musk-rose, and the well-attired woodbine,
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
And every flower that sad embroidery wears:
Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,

And daffodillies fill their cups with tears,
To strow the laureat herse where Lycid lies.
For, so to interpose a little ease,
Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise.
Ay me! whilst thee the shores and souuding seas
Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurl'd,
Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,
Where thou, perhaps, under the whelming tide,
Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world:
Or whether thou, to our moist vows denied,
Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus[7] old,
Where the great vision of the guarded mount[8]
Looks toward Namancos[9] and Bayona's hold;
Look homeward, angel, now, and melt with ruth:
And, O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth.

Weep no more, woful shepherds, weep no more,
For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,
Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor:
So sinks the day-star in the ocean-bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky:
So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high, [waves,
Through the dear might of Him[10] that walk'd the
Where other groves and other streams along,
With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,
And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,
In the bless'd kingdoms meek of joy and love.
There entertain him all the saints above,
In solemn troops, and sweet societies,
That sing, and, singing, in their glory move,
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.
Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more;
Henceforth thou art the Genius of the shore,

In thy large recompense, and shalt be good
To all that wander in that perilous flood.

Thus sang the uncouth swain to the oaks and rills,
While the still morn went out with sandals gray;
He touch'd the tender stops of various quills,
With eager thought warbling his Doric lay:
And now the sun had stretch'd out all the hills,
And now was dropp'd into the western bay;
At last he rose, and twitch'd his mantle blue:
To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.

NOTES ON LYCIDAS.

1 The isles of Anglesey and of Man have both shared this title.

2 The river Dee, the ancient boundary between England and Wales.

3 A river of Venetia, on whose banks Virgil was born.

4 Eolus, the son of Hippotas.

5 One of the Nereides, who was commonly invoked by mariners in storms.

6 Saint Peter. 7 A Cornish giant.

8 Mount St. Michael, not far from the Land's End in Cornwall, whence at low water it is accessible. "The *guarded* mount," says Mr. Warton, "is simply the *fortified* mount; and the *great vision* is the famous apparition of St. Michael, who is said to have appeared on the top of the mount, and to have directed a church to be built there."

9 Or Numantia, a town of Old Castile, once highly celebrated in the Spanish history.—*Todd.*

10 A description of our Saviour.

CHRISTMAS HYMN.

It was the winter wild,
While the heaven-born child
All meanly wrapp'd in the rude manger lies;
Nature, in awe to him,
Had doff'd her gaudy trim,
With her great master so to sympathize:
It was no season then for her
To wanton with the sun, her lusty paramour.

Only with speeches fair
She woos the gentle air
To hide her guilty front with innocent snow;
And on her naked shame,
Pollute with sinful blame,
The saintly veil of maiden white to throw;
Confounded, that her Maker's eyes
Should look so near upon her foul deformities.

But he, her fears to cease,
Sent down the meek-eyed Peace;
She, crown'd with olive-green, came softly sliding
Down through the turning sphere,
His ready harbinger,
With turtle wing the amorous clouds dividing;
And, waving wide her myrtle wand,
She strikes an universal peace through sea and land.

No war, or battle's sound,
Was heard the world around:
  The idle spear and shield were high up hung:
The hooked chariot stood
Unstain'd with hostile blood;
  The trumpet spake not to the armed throng;
And kings sat still with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their Sovereign Lord was by.

But peaceful was the night,
Wherein the Prince of Light
  His reign of peace upon the earth began:
The winds, with wonder whist,
Smoothly the waters kiss'd,
  Whispering new joys to the mild ocean;
Who now hath quite forgot to rave, [wave.
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmed

The stars, with deep amaze,
Stand fix'd in stedfast gaze,
  Bending one way their precious influence;
And will not take their flight,
For all the morning light,
  Or Lucifer, that often warn'd them thence;
But in their glimmering orbs did glow,
Until their Lord himself bespake, and bid them go.

And, though the shady gloom
Had given day her room,
  The sun himself withheld his wonted speed,
And hid his head for shame,
As his inferior flame
  The new-enlighten'd world no more should need;
He saw a greater Sun appear [bear.
Than his bright throne, or burning axletree, could

The shepherds on the lawn,
Or ere the point of dawn,
Sat simply chatting in a rustic row:
Full little thought they then
That the mighty Pan
Was kindly come to live with them below;
Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep:

When such music sweet
Their hearts and ears did greet,
As never was by mortal finger strook;
Divinely-warbled voice
Answering the stringed noise,
As all their souls in blissful rapture took:
The air, such pleasure loth to lose, [close.
With thousand echoes still prolongs each heavenly

Nature, that heard such sound,
Beneath the hollow round
Of Cynthia's seat, the aery region thrilling,
Now was almost won
To think her part was done,
And that her reign had here its last fulfilling;
She knew such harmony alone
Could hold all heaven and earth in happier union.

At last surrounds their sight
A globe of circular light,
That with long beams the shamefaced night
The helmed Cherubim, [array'd;
And sworded Seraphim,
Are seen in glittering ranks with wings display'd,
Harping in loud and solemn quire, [Heir.
With unexpressive notes, to Heaven's new-born

Such music, as 'tis said,
Before was never made,
  But when of old the sons of morning sung,
While the Creator great
His constellations set,
  And the well-balanced world on hinges hung;
And cast the dark foundations deep, [keep.
And bid the weltering waves their oozy channel

Ring out, ye crystal spheres,
Once bless our human ears,
  If ye have power to touch our senses so;
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time;
  And let the bass of Heaven's deep organ blow;
And, with your ninefold harmony,
Make up full consort to the angelic symphony.

For, if such holy song
Enwrap our fancy long,
  Time will run back, and fetch the age of gold;
And speckled Vanity
Will sicken soon and die,
  And leprous Sin will melt from earthly mould;
And Hell itself will pass away,
And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering day.

Yea, Truth and Justice then
Will down return to men,
  Orb'd in a rainbow; and, like glories wearing,
Mercy will sit between,
Throned in celestial sheen, [ing;
  With radiant feet the tissued clouds down steer-
And Heaven, as at some festival,
Will open wide the gates of her high palace hall.

But wisest Fate says no,
This must not yet be so;
The Babe lies yet in smiling infancy,
That on the bitter cross
Must redeem our loss;
So both himself and us to glorify;
Yet first, to those ychain'd in sleep, [the deep;
The wakeful trump of doom must thunder through

With such a horrid clang
As on mount Sinai rang, [brake:
While the red fire and smouldering clouds out
The aged earth aghast,
With terror of that blast,
Shall from the surface to the centre shake;
When, at the world's last session, [throne.
The dreadful Judge in middle air shall spread his

And then at last our bliss
Full and perfect is,
But now begins: for, from this happy day,
The old Dragon, under ground,
In straiter limits bound,
Not half so far casts his usurped sway;
And, wroth to see his kingdom fail,
Swinges the scaly horror of his folded tail.

The oracles are dumb,
No voice or hideous hum
Runs through the arched roof in words deceiving:
Apollo from his shrine
Can no more divine,
With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving:
No nightly trance, or breathed spell,
Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell.

The lonely mountains o'er,
And the resounding shore,
A voice of weeping heard and loud lament;
From haunted spring and dale,
Edged with poplar pale,
The parting Genius is with sighing sent;
With flower-inwoven tresses torn, [mourn.
The Nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets

In consecrated earth,
And on the holy hearth,
The Lars and Lemures moan with midnight plaint;
In urns and altars round,
A drear and dying sound
Affrights the flamens at their service quaint;
And the chill marble seems to sweat,
While each peculiar Power foregoes his wonted seat.

Peor and Bäalim
Forsake their temples dim,
With that twice-batter'd god of Palestine;
And mooned Ashtaroth,
Heaven's queen and mother both,
Now sits not girt with tapers' holy shine;
The Libyc Hammon shrinks his horn, [mourn.
In vain the Tyrian maids their wounded Thammuz

And sullen Moloch, fled,
Hath left in shadows dread
His burning idol all of blackest hue;
In vain with cymbals' ring
They call the grisly king,
In dismal dance about the furnace blue:
The brutish gods of Nile as fast,
Isis and Orus, and the dog Anubis, haste.

Nor is Osiris seen
In Memphian grove or green, [loud:
  Trampling the unshower'd grass with lowings
Nor can he be at rest
Within his sacred chest;
  Naught but profoundest hell can be his shroud;
In vain with timbrell'd anthems dark
The sable-stoled sorcerers bear his worshipp'd ark.

He feels from Juda's land
The dreaded Infant's hand,
  The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky eyne;
Nor all the gods beside
Longer dare abide;
  Not Typhon huge, ending in snaky twine:
Our Babe, to show his Godhead true,
Can in his swaddling bands control the damned crew.

So, when the sun in bed,
Curtain'd with cloudy red,
  Pillows his chin upon an orient wave,
The flocking shadows pale
Troop to the infernal jail,
  Each fetter'd ghost slips to his several grave;
And the yellow-skirted fayes [maze.
Fly after the night-steeds, leaving their moon-loved

But see, the Virgin bless'd
Hath laid her Babe to rest;
  Time is, our tedious song should here have ending:
Heaven's youngest-teemed star
Hath fix'd her polish'd car,
  Her sleeping Lord with handmaid lamp attending:
And all about the courtly stable
Bright-harness'd angels sit in order serviceable.

UPON THE

CIRCUMCISION.

Ye flaming powers, and winged warriors bright,
That erst with music and triumphant song,
First heard by happy watchful shepherds' ear,
So sweetly sung your joy the clouds along
Through the soft silence of the listening night;
Now mourn; and, if sad share with us to bear
Your fiery essence can distil no tear,
Burn in your sighs, and borrow
Seas wept from our deep sorrow:
He, who with all Heaven's heraldry whilere
Enter'd the world, now bleeds to give us ease.
Alas, how soon our sin
  Sore doth begin
    His infancy to seize!
O more exceeding love, or law more just!
Just law, indeed, but more exceeding love!
For we, by rightful doom remediless,
Were lost in death, till He, that dwelt above
High throned in secret bliss, for us frail dust
Emptied his glory, ev'n to nakedness;
And that great covenant, which we still transgress,
Entirely satisfied,
And the full wrath beside
Of vengeful justice bore for our excess;
And seals obedience first, with wounding smart,
This day; but O, ere long,
Huge pangs and strong
  Will pierce more near his heart.

ON THE

DEATH OF A FAIR INFANT,

DYING OF A COUGH.[1]

O FAIREST flower, no sooner blown but blasted,
Soft silken primrose, fading timelessly,
Summer's chief honour, if thou hadst out-lasted
Bleak Winter's force, that made thy blossom dry:
For he, being amorous on that lovely dye
That did thy cheek envermeil, thought to kiss,
But kill'd, alas! and then bewail'd his fatal bliss.

For since grim Aquilo, his charioteer,
By boisterous rape the Athenian damsel got,
He thought it touch'd his deity full near,
If likewise he some fair one wedded not,
Thereby to wipe away the infamous blot
Of long-uncoupled bed and childless eld,
Which, 'mongst the wanton gods, a foul reproach was held.

So, mounting up in icy-pearled car,
Through middle empire of the freezing air,
He wander'd long, till thee he spied from far;
There ended was his quest, there ceased his care:
Down he descended from his snow-soft chair,
But, all unwares, with his cold-kind embrace
Unhoused thy virgin soul from her fair biding-place.

[1] Written in 1625, when Milton was seventeen. The infant was a daughter of the poet's sister, Phillips.—*Warton.*

Yet art thou not inglorious in thy fate;
For so Apollo, with unweeting hand,
Whilom did slay his dearly-loved mate,
Young Hyacinth, born on Eurotas' strand—
Young Hyacinth, the pride of Spartan land;
But then transform'd him to a purple flower:
Alack, that so to change thee Winter had no power!

Yet can I not persuade me thou art dead,
Or that thy corse corrupts in earth's dark womb;
Or that thy beauties lie in wormy bed,
Hid from the world in a low-delved tomb.
Could Heaven for pity thee so strictly doom?
O no! for something in thy face did shine
Above mortality, that show'd thou wast divine.

Resolve me, then, O soul most surely bless'd;
(If so it be that thou these plaints dost hear)
Tell me, bright Spirit, where'er thou hoverest,
Whether above that high first-moving sphere,
Or in the Elysian fields; (if such there were)
O say me true, if thou wert mortal wight,
And why from us so quickly thou didst take thy flight?

Wert thou some star which from the ruin'd roof
Of shaked Olympus by mischance didst fall;
Which careful Jove in Nature's true behoof
Took up, and in fit place did reinstall?
Or did of late Earth's sons besiege the wall
Of sheeny heaven, and thou, some goddess fled,
Amongst us here below to hide thy nectar'd head?

Or wert thou that just maid, who once before
Forsook the hated earth, (O tell me sooth!)
And camest again to visit us once more?
Or wert thou Mercy, that sweet-smiling youth?
Or that crown'd matron sage, white-robed Truth?
  Or any other of that heavenly brood,
Let down in cloudy throne to do the world some good?

Or wert thou of the golden-winged host,
Who, having clad thyself in human weed,
To earth from thy prefixed seat didst post,
And after short abode fly back with speed,
As if to show what creatures heaven doth breed;
  Thereby to set the hearts of men on fire
To scorn the sordid world, and unto heaven aspire?

But O! why didst thou not stay here below
To bless us with thy heaven-loved innocence;
To slake his wrath whom sin hath made our foe;
To turn swift-rushing black Perdition hence,
Or drive away the slaughtering Pestilence;
  To stand 'twixt us and our deserved smart?—
But thou canst best perform that office where thou art.

Then thou, the mother of so sweet a child,
Her false-imagined loss cease to lament,
And wisely learn to curb thy sorrows wild;
Think what a present thou to God hast sent,
And render him with patience what he lent:
  This if thou do, he will an offspring give,
That, till the world's last end, shall make thy name to live.

ON TIME.

Fly, envious Time, till thou run out thy race;
Call on the lazy leaden-stepping hours,
Whose speed is but the heavy plummet's pace;
And glut thyself with what thy womb devours,
Which is no more than what is false and vain,
And merely mortal dross;
So little is our loss,
So little is thy gain!
For when as each thing bad thou hast entomb'd,
And last of all thy greedy self consumed,
Then long Eternity shall greet our bliss
With an individual kiss;
And Joy shall overtake us as a flood,
When every thing that is sincerely good,
And perfectly divine,
With Truth, and Peace, and Love, shall ever shine
About the supreme throne
Of Him, to whose happy-making sight alone
When once our heavenly-guided soul shall climb;
Then, all this earthy grossness quit,
Attired with stars, we shall for ever sit,
Triumphing over Death, and Chance, and thee,
O Time!

AT

A SOLEMN MUSIC.

Bless'd pair of Sirens, pledges of Heaven's joy,
Sphere-born harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse,
Wed your divine sounds, and mix'd power employ
Dead things with inbreathed sense able to pierce;
And to our high-raised phantasy present
That undisturbed song of pure consent,
Aye sung before the sapphire-colour'd throne
To him that sits thereon,
With saintly shout, and solemn jubilee;
Where the bright Seraphim, in burning row,
Their loud uplifted angel-trumpets blow:
And the cherubic host, in thousand quires,
Touch their immortal harps of golden wires,
With those just Spirits that wear victorious palms,
Hymns devout and holy psalms
Singing everlastingly:
That we on earth, with undiscording voice,
May rightly answer that melodious noise;
As once we did, till disproportion'd sin
Jarr'd against Nature's chime, and with harsh din
Broke the fair music that all creatures made
To their great Lord, whose love their motion sway'd
In perfect diapason, whilst they stood
In first obedience, and their state of good.
O, may we soon again renew that song,
And keep in tune with Heaven, till God ere long
To his celestial concert us unite,
To live with him, and sing in endless morn of light!

TO THE NIGHTINGALE.

O NIGHTINGALE, that on yon bloomy spray
Warblest at eve, when all the woods are still;
Thou with fresh hope the lover's heart dost fill,
While the jolly Hours lead on propitious May.
Thy liquid notes, that close the eye of day,
First heard before the shallow cuckoo's bill,
Portend success in love. O, if Jove's will
Have link'd that amorous power to thy soft lay,
Now timely sing, ere the rude bird of hate
Foretel my hopeless doom in some grove nigh;
As thou from year to year hast sung too late
For my relief, yet hadst no reason why:
Whether the Muse, or Love, call thee his mate,
Both them I serve, and of their train am I.

ON HIS BEING ARRIVED AT THE AGE OF 23.

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
Stolen on his wing my three-and-twentieth year!
My hasting days fly on with full career,
But my late spring no bud or blossom sheweth.
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth,
That I to manhood am arrived so near;
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
That some more timely-happy spirits endueth.
Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure even
To that same lot, however mean or high,
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven;
All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great Task-master's eye.

ON HIS BLINDNESS.

When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent, which is death to hide,
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he, returning, chide;
'Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?'
I fondly ask: but, Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, 'God doth not need
Either man's work, or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best: his state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait.'

ON HIS DECEASED WIFE.

Methought I saw my late espoused saint
Brought to me, like Alcestis, from the grave,
Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband gave,
Rescued from death by force, though pale and faint.
Mine, as whom wash'd from spot of child-bed taint
Purification in the old Law did save,
And such, as yet once more I trust to have
Full sight of her in heaven without restraint;—
Came vested all in white, pure as her mind:
Her face was veil'd; yet to my fancied sight
Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shined
So clear, as in no face with more delight:
But O! as to embrace me she inclined,
I waked; she fled; and day brought back my night.

ON SHAKSPEARE.[1]

WHAT needs my Shakspeare, for his honour'd bones,
The labour of an age, in piled stones?
Or that his hallow'd reliques should be hid
Under a starry-pointing pyramid?
Dear son of Memory, great heir of Fame,
What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?
Thou, in our wonder and astonishment,
Hast built thyself a live-long monument.
For whilst, to the shame of slow-endeavouring art,
Thy easy numbers flow; and that each heart
Hath, from the leaves of thy unvalued book,
Those Delphic lines with deep impression took;
Then thou, our fancy of itself bereaving,
Dost make us marble with too much conceiving;
And, so sepulchred in such pomp dost lie,
That kings, for such a tomb, would wish to die.

1 This Epitaph is dated 1630, in Milton's own edition of his poems in 1673.

PARNELL.

THE HERMIT,

AND

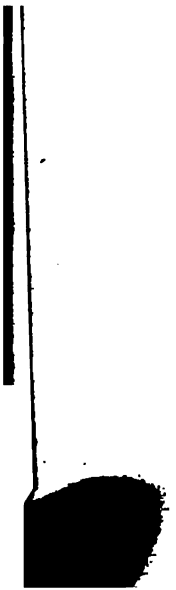
OTHER POEMS.



PARNELL.
THE HERMIT.
ETC.



The form ethereal bursts upon his sight,
And moves in all the majesty of light.



PARNELL.

THE HERMIT.

FAR in a wild, unknown to public view,
From youth to age a reverend Hermit grew;
The moss his bed, the cave his humble cell,
His food the fruits, his drink the crystal well:
Remote from man, with God he pass'd the days,
Prayer all his business, all his pleasure praise.
A life so sacred, such serene repose,
Seem'd heaven itself, till one suggestion rose;
That vice should triumph, virtue vice obey,
This sprung some doubt of Providence's sway:
His hopes no more a certain prospect boast,
And all the tenor of his soul is lost:
So when a smooth expanse receives impress'd
Calm Nature's image on its watery breast,
Down bend the banks, the trees depending grow,
And skies beneath with answering colours glow:
But if a stone the gentle sea divide,
Swift ruffling circles curl on every side,
And glimmering fragments of a broken sun,
Banks, trees, and skies, in thick disorder run.

To clear this doubt, to know the world by sight,
To find if books, or swains, report it right,
(For yet by swains alone the world he knew,
Whose feet came wandering o'er the nightly dew)
He quits his cell; the pilgrim-staff he bore,
And fix'd the scallop in his hat before;
Then with the sun a rising journey went,
Sedate to think, and watching each event.

The morn was wasted in the pathless grass,
And long and lonesome was the wild to pass;
But when the southern sun had warm'd the day,
A youth came posting o'er a crossing way;
His raiment decent, his complexion fair,
And soft in graceful ringlets waved his hair.
Then near approaching, 'Father, hail!' he cried;
And, 'Hail, my son!' the reverend sire replied:
Words follow'd words, from question answer flow'd,
And talk of various kind deceived the road;
Till each with other pleased, and loth to part,
While in their age they differ, join in heart:
Thus stands an aged elm, in ivy bound;
Thus youthful ivy clasps an elm around.

Now sunk the sun; the closing hour of day
Came onward, mantled o'er with sober gray;
Nature in silence bid the world repose;
When near the road a stately palace rose:
There by the moon through ranks of trees they pass,
Whose verdure crown'd their sloping sides of grass.
It chanced the noble master of the dome
Still made his house the wandering stranger's home:
Yet still the kindness, from a thirst of praise,
Proved the vain flourish of expensive ease.
The pair arrive: the liveried servants wait:
Their lord receives them at the pompous gate.

The table groans with costly piles of food,
And all is more than hospitably good.
Then led to rest, the day's long toil they drown,
Deep sunk in sleep, and silk, and heaps of down.
At length 'tis morn, and at the dawn of day,
Along the wide canals the zephyrs play:
Fresh o'er the gay parterres the breezes creep,
And shake the neighbouring wood to banish sleep.
Up rise the guests, obedient to the call:
An early banquet deck'd the splendid hall:
Rich luscious wine a golden goblet graced,
Which the kind master forced the guests to taste.
Then pleased and thankful from the porch they go;
And, but the landlord, none had cause of woe;
His cup was vanish'd: for in secret guise
The younger guest purloin'd the glittering prize.
As one who spies a serpent in his way,
Glistening and basking in the summer ray,
Disorder'd stops to shun the danger near,
Then walks with faintness on, and looks with fear:
So seem'd the sire; when, far upon the road,
The shining spoil his wily partner show'd.
He stopp'd with silence, walk'd with trembling heart,
And much he wish'd, but durst not ask to part:
Murmuring he lifts his eyes, and thinks it hard,
That generous actions meet a base reward.
While thus they pass, the sun his glory shrouds,
The changing skies hang out their sable clouds;
A sound in air presaged approaching rain,
And beasts to covert scud across the plain.
Warn'd by the signs, the wandering pair retreat,
To seek for shelter at a neighbouring seat.
'Twas built with turrets, on a rising ground,
And strong, and large, and unimproved around;

Its owner's temper, timorous and severe,
Unkind and griping, caused a desert there.
As near the Miser's heavy doors they drew,
Fierce rising gusts with sudden fury blew;
The nimble lightning mix'd with showers began,
And o'er their heads loud rolling thunders ran.
Here long they knock, but knock or call in vain,
Driven by the wind, and batter'd by the rain.
At length some pity warm'd the master's breast,
('Twas then his threshold first received a guest)
Slow creaking turns the door with jealous care,
And half he welcomes in the shivering pair;
One frugal faggot lights the naked walls,
And Nature's fervour through their limbs recalls:
Bread of the coarsest sort, with eager wine,
(Each hardly granted) served them both to dine;
And when the tempest first appear'd to cease,
A ready warning bid them part in peace.
With still remark the pondering Hermit view'd,
In one so rich, a life so poor and rude;
'And why should such (within himself he cried)
Lock the lost wealth a thousand want beside?'—
But what new marks of wonder soon took place,
In every settling feature of his face;
When from his vest the young companion bore
That cup the generous landlord own'd before,
And paid profusely with the precious bowl
The stinted kindness of this churlish soul.
But now the clouds in airy tumult fly;
The sun emerging opes an azure sky;
A fresher green the smelling leaves display,
And, glittering as they tremble, cheer the day:
The weather courts them from the poor retreat,
And the glad master bolts the wary gate.

While hence they walk, the Pilgrim's bosom wrought
With all the travel of uncertain thought;
His partner's acts without their cause appear,
'Twas there a vice, and seem'd a madness here:
Detesting that, and pitying this, he goes,
Lost and confounded with the various shows.

Now night's dim shades again involve the sky,
Again the wanderers want a place to lie,
Again they search, and find a lodging nigh.
The soil improved around, the mansion neat,
And neither poorly low, nor idly great:
It seem'd to speak its master's turn of mind,
Content, and, not for praise but virtue, kind.

Hither the walkers turn with weary feet,
Then bless the mansion, and the master greet:
Their greeting fair, bestow'd with modest guise,
The courteous master hears, and thus replies:

'Without a vain, without a grudging heart,
To him who gives us all, I yield a part;
From him you come, from him accept it here,
A frank and sober, more than costly cheer.'
He spoke, and bid the welcome table spread,
Then talk'd of virtue till the time of bed,
When the grave household round his hall repair,
Warn'd by a bell, and close the hours with prayer.

At length the world, renew'd by calm repose,
Was strong for toil, the dappled morn arose;
Before the Pilgrims part, the younger crept
Near the closed cradle where an infant slept,
And writhed his neck: the landlord's little pride,
O strange return! grew black, and gasp'd, and died.
Horror of horrors! what! his only son!
How look'd our hermit when the fact was done!

Not hell, though hell's black jaws in sunder part,
And breathe blue fire, could more assault his heart.
Confused, and struck with silence at the deed,
He flies, but, trembling, fails to fly with speed.
His steps the youth pursues; the country lay
Perplex'd with roads, a servant show'd the way:
A river cross'd the path; the passage o'er
Was nice to find; the servant trod before;
Long arms of oaks an open bridge supplied,
And deep the waves beneath the bending glide.
The youth, who seem'd to watch a time to sin,
Approach'd the careless guide, and thrust him in;
Plunging he falls, and rising lifts his head,
Then flashing turns, and sinks among the dead.
Wild, sparkling rage inflames the father's eyes;
He bursts the bands of fear, and madly cries,
'Detested wretch!'—But scarce his speech began,
When the strange partner seem'd no longer man:
His youthful face grew more serenely sweet;
His robe turn'd white, and flow'd upon his feet;
Fair rounds of radiant points invest his hair;
Celestial odours breathe through purpled air;
And wings, whose colours glitter'd on the day,
Wide at his back their gradual plumes display;
The form ethereal burst upon his sight,
And moves in all the majesty of light.
Though loud at first the Pilgrim's passion grew,
Sudden he gazed, and wist not what to do;
Surprise in secret chains his words suspends,
And in a calm his settled temper ends.
But silence here the beauteous angel broke:
(The voice of music ravish'd as he spoke)
'Thy prayer, thy praise, thy life, to vice unknown,
In sweet memorial rise before the throne:

These charms success in our bright region find,
And force an angel down to calm thy mind;
For this commission'd, I forsook the sky;
Nay, cease to kneel—Thy fellow-servant I.

'Then know the truth of government divine,
And let these scruples be no longer thine.

'The Maker justly claims that world he made,
In this the right of Providence is laid;
Its sacred majesty through all depends
On using second means to work his ends:
'Tis thus withdrawn in state from human eye,
The Power exerts his attributes on high;
Your actions uses, nor controls your will,
And bids the doubting sons of men be still.

'What strange events can strike with more surprise
Than those which lately struck thy wondering eyes?
Yet, taught by these, confess the Almighty just,
And, where you can't unriddle, learn to trust!

'The great, vain man, who fared on costly food,
Whose life was too luxurious to be good;
Who made his ivory stands with goblets shine,
And forced his guests to morning draughts of wine,
Has, with the cup, the graceless custom lost,
And still he welcomes, but with less of cost.

'The mean, suspicious wretch, whose bolted door
Ne'er moved in pity to the wandering poor;
With him I left the cup, to teach his mind
That Heaven can bless, if mortals will be kind.
Conscious of wanting worth, he views the bowl,
And feels compassion touch his grateful soul.
Thus artists melt the sullen ore of lead,
With heaping coals of fire upon its head;

In the kind warmth the metal learns to glow,
And, loose from dross, the silver runs below.
'Long had our pious friend in virtue trod,
But now the child half-wean'd his heart from God;
(Child of his age) for him he lived in pain,
And measured back his steps to earth again.
To what excesses had his dotage run!
But God, to save the father, took the son.
To all but thee, in fits he seem'd to go:
(And 'twas my ministry to deal the blow)
The poor fond parent, humbled in the dust,
Now owns in tears the punishment was just.
'But now had all his fortune felt a wrack,
Had that false servant sped in safety back;
This night his treasured heaps he meant to steal,
And what a fund of charity would fail!
'Thus Heaven instructs thy mind: this trial o'er,
Depart in peace, resign, and sin no more.'
On sounding pinions here the youth withdrew,
The sage stood wondering as the seraph flew.
Thus look'd Elisha, when, to mount on high,
His master took the chariot of the sky;
The fiery pomp ascending left the view;
The prophet gazed, and wish'd to follow too.
The bending Hermit here a prayer begun,
'Lord! as in heaven, on earth thy will be done!'
Then gladly turning sought his ancient place,
And pass'd a life of piety and peace.

PIETY;

OR, THE VISION.

'Twas when the night in silent sable fled,
When cheerful morning sprung with rising red,
When dreams and vapours leave to crowd the brain,
And best the vision draws its heavenly scene;
'Twas then, as slumbering on my couch I lay,
A sudden splendor seem'd to kindle day,
A breeze came breathing in a sweet perfume,
Blown from eternal gardens, fill'd the room;
And in a void of blue, that clouds invest,
Appear'd a daughter of the realms of rest:
Her head a ring of golden glory wore,
Her honour'd hand the sacred volume bore;
Her raiment, glittering, seem'd a silver white,
And all her sweet companions sons of light.
Straight as I gazed, my fear and wonder grew;
Fear barr'd my voice, and wonder fix'd my view;
When lo! a cherub of the shining crowd,
That sail'd as guardian in her azure cloud,
Fann'd the soft air, and downward seem'd to glide,
And to my lips a living coal applied.
Then while the warmth o'er all my pulses ran,
Diffusing comfort, thus the maid began:
'Where glorious mansions are prepared above,
The seats of music, and the seats of love,

Thence I descend, and Piety my name,
To warm thy bosom with celestial flame,
To teach thee praises mix'd with humble prayers,
And tune thy soul to sing seraphic airs:
Be thou my bard.' A vial here she caught
(An angel's hand the crystal vial brought),
And as with awful sound the word was said,
She pour'd a sacred unction on my head;
Then thus proceeded:—'Be thy muse thy zeal;
Dare to be good, and all my joys reveal.
While other pencils flattering forms create,
And paint the gaudy plumes that deck the great;
While other pens exalt the vain delight,
Whose wasteful revel wakes the depth of night;
Or others softly sing in idle lines
How Damon courts, or Amaryllis shines;
More wisely thou select a theme divine,
Fame is their recompense, 'tis heaven is thine!
'Despise the raptures of discorded fire,
Where wine, or passion, or applause inspire
Low restless life, and ravings born of earth,
Whose meaner subjects speak their humble birth;
Like working seas, that when loud winters blow,
Not made for rising, only rage below.
Mine is a warm and yet a lambent heat,
More lasting still, as more intensely great,
Produced where prayer, and praise, and pleasure breathe,
And ever mounting whence it shot beneath.
Unpaint the love, that, hovering over beds,
From glittering pinions guilty pleasure sheds;
Restore the colour to the golden mines
With which behind the feather'd idol shines;

To flowering greens give back their native care,
The rose and lily never his to wear;
To sweet Arabia send the balmy breath;
Strip the fair flesh, and call the phantom, Death;
His bow be sabled o'er, his shafts the same,
And fork and point them with eternal flame.
'But urge thy powers, thine utmost voice advance,
Make the loud strings against thy fingers dance:
'Tis love that angels praise and men adore;
'Tis love divine that asks it all, and more.
Fling back the gates of ever-blazing day,
Pour floods of liquid light to gild the way;
And, all in glory rapt, through paths untrod
Pursue the great unseen descent of God:
Hail the meek Virgin, bid the child appear,
The child is God! and call him Jesus here.
He comes; but where to rest? A manger's nigh;
Make the great being in a manger lie;
Fill the wide sky with angels on the wing,
Make thousands gaze, and make ten thousand sing;
Let men afflict him, men he came to save,
And still afflict him till he reach the grave;
Make him resign'd, his loads of sorrow meet,
And me, like Mary, weep beneath his feet:
I 'll bathe my tresses there, my prayers rehearse,
And glide in flames of love along thy verse.
'Ah! while I speak, I feel my bosom swell;
My raptures smother what I long to tell.
'Tis God! a present God! Through cleaving air
I see the throne, and see the Jesus there
Placed on the right. He shows the wounds he bore,
(My fervors oft have won him thus before) [ear;
How pleased he looks! my words have reach'd his
He bids the gates unbar, and calls me near.'

She ceased. The cloud, on which she seem'd to tread,
Its curls unfolded, and around her spread;
Bright angels waft their wings to raise the cloud,
And sweep their ivory lutes, and sing aloud:
The scene moves off, while all its ambient sky
Is turn'd to wondrous music as they fly;
And soft the swelling sounds of music grow,
And faint their softness, till they fail below.

My downy sleep the warmth of Phœbus broke,
And while my thoughts were settling thus I spoke:
'Thou beauteous vision! on my soul impress'd,
When most my reason would appear to rest,
'Twas sure with pencils dipp'd in various lights
Some curious angel limn'd thy sacred sights;
From blazing suns his radiant gold he drew,
White moons the silver gave, and air the blue.
I 'll mount the roving winds' expanded wing,
And seek the sacred hill, and light to sing:
('Tis known in Jewry well) I 'll make my lays,
Obedient to thy summons, sound with praise.

'But still I fear, unwarm'd with holy flame,
I take for truth the flatteries of a dream;
And barely wish the wondrous gift I boast,
And faintly practise what deserves it most.

'Indulgent Lord! whose gracious love displays
Joy in the light, and fills the dark with ease,
Be this, to bless my days, no dream of bliss;
Or be, to bless the nights, my dreams like this.'

NIGHT-PIECE ON DEATH.

By the blue taper's trembling light
No more I waste the wakeful night,
Intent with endless view to pore
The schoolmen and the sages o'er:
Their books from wisdom widely stray,
Or point at best the longest way;
I 'll seek a readier path, and go
Where wisdom 's surely taught below.
How deep yon azure dyes the sky!
Where orbs of gold unnumber'd lie,
While through their ranks in silver pride
The nether crescent seems to glide.
The slumbering breeze forgets to breathe,
The lake is smooth and clear beneath,
Where once again the spangled show
Descends to meet our eyes below.
The grounds which on the right aspire,
In dimness from the view retire:
The left presents a place of graves,
Whose wall the silent water laves.
That steeple guides thy doubtful sight
Among the livid gleams of night.
There pass, with melancholy state,
By all the solemn heaps of fate,
And think, as softly sad you tread
Above the venerable dead,
'Time was, like thee they life possess'd,
And time shall be, that thou shalt rest.'
Those, with bending ozier bound,
That nameless heave the crumbled ground,

Quick to the glancing thought disclose
Where toil and poverty repose.
The flat smooth stones that bear a name,
The chisel's slender help to fame,
(Which, ere our set of friends decay,
Their frequent steps may wear away;)
A middle race of mortals own,
Men, half ambitious, all unknown.
The marble tombs that rise on high,
Whose dead in vaulted arches lie,
Whose pillars swell with sculptured stones,
Arms, angels, epitaphs, and bones;
These, all the poor remains of state,
Adorn the rich, or praise the great;
Who while on earth in fame they live,
Are senseless of the fame they give.
Ha! while I gaze, pale Cynthia fades,
The bursting earth unveils the shades:
All slow, and wan, and wrapp'd with shrouds,
They rise in visionary crowds,
And all with sober accent cry,
'Think, mortal, what it is to die!'
Now from yon black and funeral yew,
That bathes the charnel-house with dew,
Methinks, I hear a voice begin;
(Ye ravens, cease your croaking din,
Ye tolling clocks, no time resound
O'er the long lake and midnight ground)
It sends a peal of hollow groans,
Thus speaking from among the bones:—
'When men my scythe and darts supply,
How great a king of Fears am I?
They view me like the last of things;
They make, and then they dread my stings.

Fools; if you less provoked your fears,
No more my spectre form appears.
Death 's but a path that must be trod,
If man would ever pass to God:
A port of calms, a state of ease
From the rough rage of swelling seas.

'Why then thy flowing sable stoles,
Deep pendent cypress, mourning poles,
Loose scarfs to fall athwart thy weeds,
Long palls, drawn hearses, cover'd steeds,
And plumes of black, that as they tread,
Nod o'er the 'scutcheons of the dead?

'Nor can the parted body know,
Nor wants the soul, these forms of woe:
As men who long in prison dwell,
With lamps that glimmer round the cell,
Whene'er their suffering years are run,
Spring forth to greet the glittering sun:
Such joy, though far transcending sense,
Have pious souls at parting hence.
On earth, and in the body placed,
A few, and evil years they waste:
But when their chains are cast aside,
See the glad scene unfolding wide,
Clap the glad wing, and tower away,
And mingle with the blaze of day.'

HYMN TO CONTENTMENT.

LOVELY, lasting peace of mind!
Sweet delight of human kind!
Heavenly born, and bred on high,
To crown the favourites of the sky
With more of happiness below,
Than victors in a triumph know!
Whither, O whither art thou fled,
To lay thy meek, contented head?
What happy region dost thou please
To make the seat of calms and ease?
'Ambition searches all its sphere
Of pomp and state, to meet thee there.
Increasing Avarice would find
Thy presence in its gold enshrined.
The bold adventurer ploughs his way,
Through rocks amidst the foaming sea,
To gain thy love; and then perceives
Thou wert not in the rocks and waves.
The silent heart which grief assails,
Treads soft and lonesome o'er the vales;
Sees daisies open, rivers run,
And seeks (as I have vainly done)
Amusing thought; but learns to know
That Solitude 's the nurse of woe.
No real happiness is found
In trailing purple o'er the ground:
Or in a soul exalted high,
To range the circuit of the sky,
Converse with stars above, and know
All nature in its forms below;

The rest it seeks, in seeking dies,
And doubts at last for knowledge rise.
'Lovely, lasting Peace, appear!
This world itself, if thou art here,
Is once again with Eden bless'd,
And man contains it in his breast.'—
'Twas thus, as under shade I stood,
I sung my wishes to the wood,
And, lost in thought, no more perceived
The branches whisper as they waved:
It seem'd, as all the quiet place
Confess'd the presence of the Grace;
When thus she spoke—'Go, rule thy will,
Bid thy wild passions all be still;
Know God—and bring thy heart to know
The joys which from religion flow:
Then every Grace shall prove its guest,
And I 'll be there to crown the rest.'
O! by yonder mossy seat,
In my hours of sweet retreat;
Might I thus my soul employ,
With sense of gratitude and joy:
Raised as ancient prophets were,
In heavenly vision, praise, and prayer;
Pleasing all men, hurting none,
Pleased and bless'd with God alone:
Then, while the gardens take my sight,
With all the colours of delight;
While silver waters glide along,
To please my ear, and court my song;
I 'll lift my voice, and tune my string,
And thee, great Source of Nature! sing.
The sun that walks his airy way,
To light the world, and give the day;

The moon that shines with borrow'd light;
The stars that gild the gloomy night;
The seas that roll unnumber'd waves;
The wood that spreads its shady leaves;
The field whose ears conceal the grain,
The yellow treasure of the plain;
All of these, and all I see,
Should be sung, and sung by me:
They speak their Maker as they can,
But want and ask the tongue of man.
Go search among your idle dreams,
Your busy, or your vain extremes;
And find a life of equal bliss,
Or own the next begun in this.

THE BOOK-WORM.

Come hither, boy! we 'll hunt to-day
The Book-worm, ravening beast of prey,
Produced by parent Earth, at odds,
As fame reports it, with the gods.
Him frantic hunger wildly drives
Against a thousand authors' lives:
Through all the fields of wit he flies;
Dreadful his head with clustering eyes.
With horns without and tusks within,
And scales to serve him for a skin.
Observe him nearly, lest he climb
To wound the bards of ancient time;
Or down the vale of fancy go,
To tear some modern wretch below;

On every corner fix thine eye,
Or ten to one he slips thee by.
See where his teeth a passage eat:
We 'll rouse him from the deep retreat.
But who the shelter 's forced to give?
'Tis sacred Virgil, as I live!
From leaf to leaf, from song to song,
He draws the tadpole form along;
He mounts the gilded edge before;
He 's up, he scuds the cover o'er;
He turns, he doubles, there he pass'd,
And here we have him, caught at last.
Insatiate brute! whose teeth abuse
The sweetest servants of the muse.
(Nay never offer to deny,
I took thee in the fact to fly.)
His roses nipp'd in every page,
My poor Anacreon mourns thy rage.
By thee my Ovid wounded lies:
By thee my Lesbia's sparrow dies:
Thy rabid teeth have half destroy'd
The work of love in Biddy Floyd;
They rent Belinda's locks away,
And spoil'd the Blouzelind of Gay.
For all, for every single deed,
Relentless justice bids thee bleed.
Then fall a victim to the Nine,
Myself the priest, my desk the shrine.
Bring Homer, Virgil, Tasso near,
To pile a sacred altar here.
Hold, boy, thy hand outruns thy wit,
You reach'd the plays that Dennis writ;
You reach'd me Philips' rustic strain:
Pray take your mortal bards again.

Come, bind the victim,—there he lies;
And here, between his numerous eyes,
This venerable dust I lay,
From manuscripts just swept away.
The goblet in my hand I take
(For the libation 's yet to make):
A health to poets! all their days
May they have bread, as well as praise;
Sense may they seek, and less engage
In papers fill'd with party rage.
But if their riches spoil their vein,
Ye Muses, make them poor again.
Now bring the weapon, yonder blade
With which my tuneful pens are made.
I strike the scales that arm thee round,
And twice and thrice I print the wound;
The sacred altar floats with red,
And now he dies, and now he 's dead.
How like the son of Jove I stand,
This hydra stretch'd beneath my hand!
Lay bare the monster's entrails here,
To see what dangers threat the year:
Ye gods, what sonnets on a wench!
What lean translations out of French!
'Tis plain, this lobe is so unsound,
S—— prints before the months go round.
But hold, before I close the scene,
The sacred altar should be clean.
O had I Shadwell's second bays,
Or Tate, thy pert and humble lays!
(Ye pair, forgive me, when I vow
I never miss'd your works till now)
I 'd tear the leaves to wipe the shrine
(That only way you please the Nine);

But since I chance to want these two,
I 'll make the songs of Durfey do.
Rent from the corps, on yonder pin
I hang the scales that braced it in;
I hang my studious morning gown,
And write my own inscription down :—
'This trophy from the Python won,
This robe, in which the deed was done,
These Parnell, glorying in the feat,
Hung on these shelves, the Muses' seat.
Here ignorance and hunger found
Large realms of wit to ravage round;
Here ignorance and hunger fell,
Two foes in one, I sent to hell.
Ye poets, who my labours see,
Come share the triumph all with me!
Ye critics, born to vex the Muse,
Go mourn the grand ally you lose.'

ALLEGORY ON MAN.

A THOUGHTFUL being, long and spare,
Our race of mortals call him Care
(Were Homer living, well he knew
What name the gods have call'd him too);
With fine mechanic genius wrought,
And loved to work, though no one bought.
This being, by a model bred
In Jove's eternal sable head,
Contrived a shape impower'd to breathe,
And be the worldling here beneath.

The man rose staring, like a stake;
Wondering to see himself awake!
Then look'd so wise, before he knew
The business he was made to do,
That, pleased to see with what a grace
He gravely showed his forward face,
Jove talk'd of breeding him on high,
An under-something of the sky.
But ere he gave the mighty nod,
Which ever binds a poet's god
(For which his curls ambrosial shake,
And mother Earth 's obliged to quake),
He saw old mother Earth arise—
She stood confess'd before his eyes;
But not with what we read she wore,
A castle for a crown before,
Nor with long streets and longer roads
Dangling behind her, like commodes:
As yet with wreaths alone she dress'd!
And trail'd a landscape-painted vest.
Then thrice she raised, as Ovid said,
And thrice she bow'd, her weighty head.
Her honours made, 'Great Jove!' she cried,
'This thing was fashion'd from my side;
His hands, his heart, his head are mine:
Then what hast thou to call him thine?'
'Nay, rather ask,' the monarch said,
'What boots his hand, his heart, his head,
Were what I gave removed away?
Thy part 's an idle shape of clay.'
'Halves, more than halves!' cried honest Care,
'Your pleas would make your titles fair;
You claim the body, you the soul,
But I, who join'd them, claim the whole.'

Thus with the gods debate began
On such a trivial cause as man.
And can celestial tempers rage?
Quoth Virgil in a later age.
As thus they wrangled, Time came by;
(There 's none that paint him such as I,
For what the fabling ancients sung
Makes Saturn old when Time was young.)
As yet his winters had not shed
Their silver honours on his head;
He just had got his pinions free
From his old sire Eternity.
A serpent girdled round he wore,
The tail within the mouth, before;
By which our almanacs are clear
That learned Egypt meant the year.
A staff he carried, where on high
A glass was fix'd to measure by,
As amber boxes made a show
For heads of canes an age ago.
His vest, for day and night, was pied;
A bending sickle arm'd his side;
And Spring's new months his train adorn!
The other Seasons were unborn.
Known by the gods, as near he draws,
They make him umpire of the cause.
O'er a low trunk his arm he laid,
Where since his hours a dial made;
Then leaning heard the nice debate,
And thus pronounced the words of Fate:—
'Since body from the parent Earth,
And soul from Jove received a birth,
Return they where they first began;
But, since their union makes the man,

Till Jove and Earth shall part these two,
To Care, who join'd them, man is due.'
He said, and sprung with swift career
To trace a circle for the year,
Where ever since the Seasons wheel,
And tread on one another's heel.
'Tis well,' said Jove; and for consent
Thundering he shook the firmament.
'Our umpire Time shall have his way;
With Care I let the creature stay:
Let business vex him, avarice blind,
Let doubt and knowledge rack his mind,
Let error act, opinion speak,
And want afflict, and sickness break,
And anger burn, dejection chill,
And joy distract, and sorrow kill,
Till arm'd by Care, and taught to mow,
Time draws the long destructive blow;
And wasted man, whose quick decay
Comes hurrying on before his day,
Shall only find by this decree
The soul flies sooner back to me.'

A FAIRY TALE.

IN THE ANCIENT ENGLISH STYLE.

In Britain's isle, and Arthur's days,
When midnight fairies danced the maze,
Lived Edwin of the Green;
Edwin, I wis, a gentle youth,
Endow'd with courage, sense, and truth,
Though badly shaped he been.

His mountain back mote well be said
To measure height against his head,
And lift itself above;
Yet spite of all that Nature did
To make his uncouth form forbid,
This creature dared to love.

He felt the charms of Edith's eyes,
Nor wanted hope to gain the prize,
Could ladies look within;
But one Sir Topaz dress'd with art,
And, if a shape could win a heart,
He had a shape to win.

Edwin, if right I read my song,
With slighted passion paced along
All in the moony light;
'Twas near an old enchanted court,
Where sportive fairies made resort
To revel out the night.

His heart was drear, his hope was cross'd;
'Twas late, 'twas far, the path was lost
That reach'd the neighbour-town:
With weary steps he quits the shades,
Resolved, the darkling dome he treads,
And drops his limbs adown.

But scant he lays him on the floor,
When hollow winds remove the door,
And, trembling, rocks the ground:
And, well I ween to count aright,
At once a hundred tapers light
On all the walls around.

Now sounding tongues assail his ear,
Now sounding feet approachen near,
And now the sounds increase:
And from the corner where he lay
He sees a train profusely gay
Come prankling o'er the place.

But (trust me, gentles!) never yet
Was dight a masking half so neat,
Or half so rich before:
The country lent the sweet perfumes,
The sea the pearl, the sky the plumes,
The town its silken store.

Now, whilst he gazed, a gallant dress'd
In flaunting robes above the rest,
With awful accent cried,
'What mortal of a wretched mind,
Whose sighs infect the balmy wind,
Has here presumed to hide?'

At this the swain, whose venturous soul
No fears of magic art control,
Advanced in open sight:
'Nor have I cause of dreed,' he said,
Who view, by no presumption led,
Your revels of the night.

'Twas grief, for scorn of faithful love,
Which made my steps unweeting rove
Amid the nightly dew.'
'Tis well,' the gallant cries again;
'We fairies never injure men
Who dare to tell us true.

'Exalt thy love-dejected heart;
Be mine the task, or ere we part,
To make thee grief resign:
Now take the pleasure of thy chaunce;
Whilst I with Mab, my partner, daunce,
Be little Mable thine.'

He spoke, and all a sudden there
Light music floats in wanton air;
The monarch leads the queen:
The rest their fairy partners found;
And Mable trimly tripp'd the ground
With Edwin of the Green.

The dauncing pass'd, the board was laid,
And siker such a feast was made
As heart and lip desire;
Withouten hands the dishes fly,
The glasses with a wish come nigh,
And with a wish retire.

But now, to please the fairy king,
Full every deal they laugh and sing,
And antic feats devise;
Some wind and tumble like an ape,
And other some transmute their shape
In Edwin's wondering eyes.

Till one at last, that Robin hight,
Renown'd for pinching maids by night,
Has hent him up aloof;
And full against the beam he flung,
Where by the back the youth he hung
To spraul unneath the roof.

From thence, 'Reverse my charm,' he cries,
'And let it fairly now suffice
The gambol has been shown:'
But Oberon answers, with a smile,
'Content thee, Edwin, for a while,
The vantage is thine own.'

Here ended all the phantom play;
They smelt the fresh approach of day,
And heard a cock to crow;
The whirling wind that bore the crowd
Has clapp'd the door, and whistled loud,
To warn them all to go.

Then screaming all at once they fly,
And all at once the tapers die;
Poor Edwin falls to floor:
Forlorn his state, and dark the place,
Was never wight in sike a case
Through all the land before.

But soon as Dan Apollo rose,
Full jolly creature home he goes,
He feels his back the less;
His honest tongue and steady mind
Han rid him of the lump behind,
Which made him want success.

With lusty livelyhed he talks,
He seems a dauncing as he walks,
His story soon took wind;
And beauteous Edith sees the youth
Endow'd with courage, sense, and truth,
Without a bunch behind.

The story told, Sir Topaz moved,
The youth of Edith erst approved,
To see the revel scene:
At close of eve he leaves his home,
And wends to find the ruin'd dome
All on the gloomy plain.

As there he bides, it so befell,
The wind came rustling down a dell,
A shaking seized the wall;
Up spring the tapers as before,
The fairies bragly foot the floor,
And music fills the hall.

But, certes, sorely sunk with woe,
Sir Topaz sees the elfin show,
His spirits in him die:
When Oberon cries, 'A man is near,
A mortal passion, cleped fear,
Hangs flagging in the sky.'

With that Sir Topaz, hapless youth!
In accents faltering, ay, for ruth,
Intreats them pity graunt;
'For als he been a mister wight
Betray'd by wandering in the night
To tread the circled haunt.'

'Ah losell vile,' at once they roar,
'And little skill'd of fairie lore,
Thy cause to come we know:
Now has thy kestrell courage fell;
And fairies, since a lie you tell,
Are free to work thee woe.'

Then Will, who bears the whispy fire
To trail the swains among the mire,
The caitive upward flung;
There, like a tortoise in a shop,
He dangled from the chamber-top,
Where whilom Edwin hung.

The revel now proceeds apace,
Deftly they frisk it o'er the place,
They sit, they drink, and eat;
The time with frolic mirth beguile,
And poor Sir Topaz hangs the while,
Till all the rout retreat.

By this the stars began to wink,
They shriek, they fly, the tapers sink,
And down ydrops the knight:
For never spell, by fairie laid,
With strong enchantment bound a glade,
Beyond the length of night.

Chill, dark, alone, adreed he lay,
Till up the welkin rose the day,
Then deem'd the dole was o'er:
But wot ye well his harder lot?
His seely back the bunch had got
Which Edwin lost afore.

This tale a sybil nurse ared;
She softly stroak'd my youngling head,
And when the tale was done,
'Thus some are born, my son,' she cries,
'With base impediments to rise,
And some are born with none.

'But virtue can itself advance
To what the favourite fools of chance
By fortune seem design'd;
Virtue can gain the odds of fate,
And from itself shake off the weight
Upon the unworthy mind.'

IMITATION
OF
SOME FRENCH VERSES.

Relentless Time! destroying power,
Whom stone and brass obey;
Who givest to every flying hour
To work some new decay;

Unheard, unheeded, and unseen,
Thy secret saps prevail,
And ruin man, a nice machine,
By nature form'd to fail.

My change arrives; the change I meet,
Before I thought it nigh:
My spring, my years of pleasure fleet,
And all their beauties die.

In age I search, and only find
A poor unfruitful gain;
Grave Wisdom stalking slow behind,
Oppress'd with loads of pain.

My ignorance could once beguile,
And fancied joys inspire;
My errors cherish'd Hope to smile
On newly-born Desire.

But now experience shows, the bliss
For which I fondly sought,
Not worth the long impatient wish,
And ardour of the thought.

My youth met Fortune fair array'd,—
In all her pomp she shone,
And might perhaps have well essay'd
To make her gifts my own:

But when I saw the blessings shower
On some unworthy mind,
I left the chase, and own'd the Power
Was justly painted blind.

I pass'd the glories which adorn
The splendid courts of kings,
And while the persons moved my scorn,
I rose to scorn the things.

My manhood felt a vigorous fire,
By love increased the more;
But years with coming years conspire
To break the chains I wore.

In weakness safe, the sex I see
With idle lustre shine;
For what are all their joys to me,
Which cannot now be mine?

But hold—I feel my gout decrease,
My troubles laid to rest,
And truths which would disturb my peace
Are painful truths at best.

Vainly the time I have to roll
In sad reflection flies;
Ye fondling passions of my soul!
Ye sweet deceits! arise.

I wisely change the scene within,
To things that used to please;
In pain, philosophy is spleen,
In health, 'tis only ease.



DRYDEN.

ALEXANDER'S FEAST.

AND

OTHER POEMS.

DRYDEN.

ALEXANDERS FEAST,

ETC.



Thais led the way
To light him to his prey. —

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DRYDEN.

ALEXANDER'S FEAST;

OR,

THE POWER OF MUSIC.

AN ODE,

IN HONOUR OF ST. CECILIA'S DAY.

'Twas at the royal feast, for Persia won
By Philip's warlike son:
Aloft in awful state
The godlike hero sate
On his imperial throne:
His valiant peers were placed around,
Their brows with roses and with myrtles bound
(So should desert in arms be crown'd);
The lovely Thais by his side
Sate like a blooming Eastern bride,
In flower of youth and beauty's pride.
Happy, happy, happy pair!
None but the brave,
None but the brave,
None but the brave deserves the fair.

CHORUS.

Happy, happy, happy pair!
None but the brave,
None but the brave,
None but the brave deserves the fair.

Timotheus, placed on high
Amid the tuneful quire,
With flying fingers touch'd the lyre:
The trembling notes ascend the sky,
And heavenly joys inspire.
The song began from Jove,
Who left his blissful seats above
(Such is the power of mighty love),
A dragon's fiery form belied the god:
Sublime on radiant spires he rode,
When he to fair Olympia prest,
And while he sought her snowy breast;
Then round her slender waist he curl'd,
And stamp'd an image of himself, a sovereign of the world.
The listening crowd admire the lofty sound;
A present deity! they shout around:
A present deity! the vaulted roofs rebound.
With ravish'd ears
The monarch hears;
Assumes the god,
Affects to nod,
And seems to shake the spheres.

CHORUS.

With ravish'd ears
The monarch hears;

Assumes the god,
Affects to nod,
And seems to shake the spheres.

The praise of Bacchus then the sweet musician sung;
Of Bacchus, ever fair and ever young:
The jolly god in triumph comes;
Sound the trumpets, beat the drums:
Flush with a purple grace,
He shows his honest face.
Now give the hautboys breath. He comes! he comes!
Bacchus, ever fair and young,
Drinking joys did first ordain;
Bacchus' blessings are a treasure;
Drinking is the soldier's pleasure:
Rich the treasure,
Sweet the pleasure;
Sweet is pleasure after pain.

CHORUS.

Bacchus' blessings are a treasure;
Drinking is the soldier's pleasure:
Rich the treasure,
Sweet the pleasure;
Sweet is pleasure after pain.

Soothed with the sound, the king grew vain;
Fought all his battles o'er again;
And thrice he routed all his foes, and thrice he slew
the slain.
The master saw the madness rise;
His glowing cheeks, his ardent eyes;
And, while he heaven and earth defied,
Changed his hand, and check'd his pride.

He chose a mournful muse,
Soft pity to infuse:
He sung Darius, great and good,
By too severe a fate,
Fallen, fallen, fallen, fallen,
Fallen from his high estate,
And weltering in his blood:
Deserted at his utmost need
By those his former bounty fed;
On the bare earth exposed he lies,
With not a friend to close his eyes.
With downcast looks the joyless victor sate,
Revolving in his alter'd soul
The various turns of chance below;
And, now and then, a sigh he stole,
And tears began to flow.

CHORUS.

Revolving in his alter'd soul
The various turns of chance below;
And, now and then, a sigh he stole,
And tears began to flow.

The mighty master smiled to see
That love was in the next degree:
'Twas but a kindred sound to move,
For pity melts the mind to love.
Softly sweet, in Lydian measures,
Soon he soothed his soul to pleasures.
War, he sung, is toil and trouble,
Honour but an empty bubble;
Never ending, still beginning,
Fighting still, and still destroying:
If the world be worth thy winning,
Think, O think it worth enjoying.

Lovely Thais sits beside thee;
Take the good the gods provide thee.
The many rend the skies with loud applause:
So Love was crown'd, but Music won the cause.
The prince, unable to conceal his pain,
Gazed on the fair
Who caused his care,
And sigh'd and look'd, sigh'd and look'd,
Sigh'd and look'd, and sigh'd again.
At length, with love and wine at once opprest,
The vanquish'd victor sunk upon her breast.

CHORUS.

The prince, unable to conceal his pain,
Gazed on the fair
Who caused his care,
And sigh'd and look'd, sigh'd and look'd,
Sigh'd and look'd, and sigh'd again.
At length, with love and wine at once opprest,
The vanquish'd victor sunk upon her breast.

Now strike the golden lyre again:
A louder yet, and yet a louder strain.
Break his bands of sleep asunder,
And rouse him, like a rattling peal of thunder.
Hark! hark! the horrid sound
Has raised up his head,
As awaked from the dead,
And, amazed, he stares round.
Revenge, revenge, Timotheus cries,
See the furies arise!
See the snakes that they rear,
How they hiss in their hair!
And the sparkles that flash from their eyes!

Behold a ghastly band,
Each a torch in his hand!
Those are Grecian ghosts, that in battle were slain,
And unburied remain
Inglorious on the plain:
Give the vengeance due
To the valiant crew.
Behold how they toss their torches on high,
How they point to the Persian abodes,
And glittering temples of their hostile gods!
The princes applaud with a furious joy,
And the king seized a flambeau, with zeal to destroy:
Thais led the way,
To light him to his prey,
And, like another Helen, fired another Troy.

CHORUS.

And the king seized a flambeau, with zeal to destroy:
Thais led the way,
To light him to his prey,
And, like another Helen, fired another Troy.

Thus long ago,
Ere heaving bellows learn'd to blow,
While organs yet were mute,
Timotheus, to his breathing flute
And sounding lyre,
Could swell the soul to rage, or kindle soft desire.
At last divine Cecilia came,
Inventress of the vocal frame;
The sweet enthusiast, from her sacred store,
Enlarged the former narrow bounds,
And added length to solemn sounds,
With Nature's mother-wit, and arts unknown before.

Let old Timotheus yield the prize,
Or both divide the crown;
He raised a mortal to the skies,
She drew an angel down.

GRAND CHORUS.

At last divine Cecilia came,
Inventress of the vocal frame;
The sweet enthusiast, from her sacred store,
Enlarged the former narrow bounds,
And added length to solemn sounds,
With Nature's mother-wit, and arts unknown before.
Let old Timotheus yield the prize,
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He raised a mortal to the skies,
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RELIGIO LAICI.

Ornari res ipsa negat, contenta docere.

Dim as the borrow'd beams of moon and stars
To lonely, weary, wandering travellers,
Is reason to the soul; and as on high
Those rolling fires discover but the sky,
Not light us here—so Reason's glimmering ray
Was lent, not to assure our doubtful way,
But guide us upward to a better day.
And as those nightly tapers disappear
When day's bright lord ascends our hemisphere,
So pale grows Reason at Religion's sight,
So dies, and so dissolves in supernatural light.
Some few, whose lamp shone brighter, have been led
From cause to cause, to nature's secret head,
And found that one first principle must be;
But what, or who, that universal HE;
Whether some soul encompassing this ball,
Unmade, unmoved, yet making, moving all;
Or various atoms' interfering dance
Leap'd into form, the noble work of chance;
Or, this great All was from eternity,—
Not ev'n the Stagirite himself could see;
And Epicurus guess'd as well as he.
As blindly groped they for a future state;
As rashly judged of Providence and Fate:

But least of all could their endeavours find
What most concern'd the good of human kind;
For happiness was never to be found,
But vanish'd from them like enchanted ground.
One thought content the good to be enjoy'd;
This every little accident destroy'd:
The wiser madmen did for virtue toil—
A thorny, or at best a barren soil:
In pleasure some their glutton souls would steep,
But found their line too short, the well too deep,
And leaky vessels which no bliss could keep.
Thus anxious thoughts in endless circles roll,
Without a centre where to fix the soul:
In this wild maze their vain endeavours end.
How can the less the greater comprehend?
Or finite reason reach infinity?
For what could fathom God were more than he.
The Deist thinks he stands on firmer ground;
Cries Εὕρηκα; the mighty secret 's found:
God is that spring of good; supreme, and best;
We, made to serve, and in that service blest.
If so, some rules of worship must be given,
Distributed alike to all by Heaven;
Else God were partial, and to some denied
The means his justice should for all provide.
This general worship is to praise and pray;
One part to borrow blessings, one to pay:
And when frail nature slides into offence,
The sacrifice for crimes is penitence.
Yet since the effects of Providence, we find,
Are variously dispensed to human kind;
That vice triumphs, and virtue suffers here;
(A brand that sovereign Justice cannot bear)
Our reason prompts us to a future state,
The last appeal from fortune and from fate,

Where God's all-righteous ways will be declared—
The bad meet punishment, the good reward.
Thus man, by his own strength, to heaven would
And would not be obliged to God for more. [soar,
Vain, wretched creature! how art thou misled,
To think thy wit these godlike notions bred!
These truths are not the product of thy mind,
But dropp'd from heaven, and of a nobler kind.
Reveal'd Religion first inform'd thy sight,
And Reason saw not till Faith sprung the light.
Hence all thy natural worship takes the source;
'Tis Revelation what thou think'st discourse:
Else how comest thou to see these truths so clear,
Which so obscure to heathens did appear?
Not Plato these, nor Aristotle found,
Nor he whose wisdom oracles renown'd.
Hast thou a wit so deep, or so sublime,
Or canst thou lower dive, or higher climb?
Canst thou by reason more of godhead know
Than Plutarch, Seneca, or Cicero?
Those giant-wits, in happier ages born,
When arms and arts did Greece and Rome adorn,
Knew no such system; no such piles could raise
Of natural worship, built on prayer and praise,
To one sole God:
Nor did remorse, to expiate sin, prescribe,
But slew their fellow-creatures for a bribe:
The guiltless victim groan'd for their offence,
And cruelty and blood was penitence.
If sheep and oxen could atone for men,
Ah, at how cheap a rate the rich might sin!
And great oppressors might Heaven's wrath beguile,
By offering his own creatures for a spoil!
Darest thou, poor worm! offend Infinity?
And must the terms of peace be given by thee?

Then thou art justice in the last appeal:
Thy easy God instructs thee to rebel;
And, like a king remote and weak, must take
What satisfaction thou art pleased to make.
But if there be a Power, too just and strong
To wink at crimes, and bear unpunish'd wrong,
Look humbly upward, see his will disclose
The forfeit first, and then the fine impose—
A mulct thy poverty could never pay,
Had not Eternal Wisdom found the way,
And with celestial wealth supplied thy store:
His justice makes the fine, his mercy quits the score.
See God descending in thy human frame,
The offended suffering in the offender's name;
All thy misdeeds to him imputed see,
And all his righteousness devolved on thee.
For, granting we have sinn'd, and that the offence
Of man is made against Omnipotence;
Some price that bears proportion must be paid,
And infinite with infinite be weigh'd.
See then the Deist lost; remorse for vice
Not paid, or, paid, inadequate in price.
What farther means can reason now direct,
Or what relief from human wit expect?
That shows us sick; and sadly are we sure
Still to be sick till Heaven reveal the cure.
If then Heaven's will must needs be understood,
(Which must, if we want cure, and Heaven be good)
Let all records of will reveal'd be shown,
With Scripture all in equal balance thrown,
And our one sacred Book will be that one.
Proof needs not here; for whether we compare
That impious, idle, superstitious ware

Of rites, lustrations, offerings, which before,
In various ages, various countries bore,
With Christian faith and virtues, we shall find
None answering the great ends of human kind,
But this one rule of life, that shows us best
How God may be appeased, and mortals blest!
Whether from length of time its worth we draw,
The word is scarce more ancient than the law:
Heaven's early care prescribed for every age,
First in the soul, and after in the page:
Or whether more abstractedly we look,
Or on the writers, or the written Book,
Whence but from Heaven could men unskill'd in arts,
In several ages born, in several parts,
Weave such agreeing truths? or how, or why,
Should all conspire to cheat us with a lie?
Unask'd their pains, ungrateful their advice,
Starving their gain, and martyrdom their price.

If on the Book itself we cast our view,
Concurrent heathens prove the story true:
The doctrine, miracles—which must convince,
For Heaven in them appeals to human sense;
And though they prove not, they confirm the cause,
When what is taught agrees with Nature's laws.

Then for the style; majestic and divine,
It speaks no less than God in every line:
Commanding words, whose force is still the same
As the first fiat that produced our frame.
All faiths beside, or did by arms ascend,
Or sense indulged has made mankind their friend:
This only doctrine does our lusts oppose,
Unfed by Nature's soil in which it grows;
Cross to our interests, curbing sense and sin,
Oppress'd without, and undermined within,

It thrives through pain, its own tormentors tires,
And with a stubborn patience still aspires.
To what can reason such effects assign,
Transcending nature, but to laws divine,
Which in that sacred Volume are contain'd,
Sufficient, clear, and for that use ordain'd?
But stay: the Deist here will urge anew,
No supernatural worship can be true;
Because a general law is that alone
Which must to all, and every where, be known;
A style so large as not this Book can claim,
Nor aught that bears Reveal'd Religion's name.
'Tis said the sound of a Messiah's birth
Is gone through all the habitable earth;
But still that text must be confined alone
To what was then inhabited and known;
And what provision could from thence accrue
To Indian souls, and worlds discover'd new?
In other parts it helps, that ages past [braced,
The Scriptures there were known, and were em-
Till sin spread once again the shades of night:
What's that to these who never saw the light?
Of all objections this indeed is chief,
To startle reason, stagger frail belief.
We grant, 'tis true, that Heaven from human sense
Has hid the secret paths of Providence;
But boundless wisdom, boundless mercy, may
Find, ev'n for those bewilder'd souls, a way.
If from his nature foes may pity claim,
Much more may strangers who ne'er heard his name:
And though no name be for salvation known
But that of his eternal Son alone,
Who knows how far transcending goodness can
Extend the merits of that Son to man?

Who knows what reasons may his mercy lead,
Or ignorance invincible may plead?
Not only charity bids hope the best,
But more, the great Apostle has express'd,
That, 'if the Gentiles (whom no law inspired)
By nature did what was by law required;
They who the written rule had never known,
Were to themselves both rule and law alone;
To Nature's plain indictment they shall plead,
And by their conscience be condemn'd or freed.'
Most righteous doom! because a rule reveal'd
Is none to those from whom it was conceal'd.
Then those who follow'd Reason's dictates right;
Lived up, and lifted high their natural light;
With Socrates may see their Maker's face,
While thousand rubric martyrs want a place.
Nor doth it balk my charity to find
The Egyptian bishop[1] of another mind;
For though his creed eternal truth contains,
'Tis hard for man to doom to endless pains
All who believed not all his zeal required,
Unless he first could prove he was inspired.
Then let us either think he meant to say—
'This faith, where publish'd, was the only way;'
Or else conclude that, Arius to confute,
The good old man, too eager in dispute,
Flew high, and, as his Christian fury rose,
Damn'd all for heretics who durst oppose.
Thus far my charity this path hath tried
(A much unskilful, but well-meaning guide); [bred
Yet, what they are, ev'n these crude thoughts were
By reading that which better thou hast read—

[1] Athanasius, patriarch of Alexandria.

Thy matchless Author's[a] work; which thou, my friend!
By well translating, better dost commend:
Those youthful hours, which, of thy equals, most
In toys have squander'd, or in vice have lost,
Those hours hast thou to nobler use employ'd,
And the severe delights of truth enjoy'd:
Witness this weighty book, in which appears
The crabbed toil of many thoughtful years,
Spent by thy author in the sifting care
Of rabbins' old sophisticated ware
From gold divine; which he who well can sort,
May afterwards make algebra a sport:
A treasure, which, if country curates buy,
They Junius and Tremellius may defy,
Save pains in various readings and translations,
And, without Hebrew, make most learn'd quotations:
A work so full with various learning fraught,
So nicely ponder'd, yet so strongly wrought,
As Nature's height and Art's last hand required;
As much as man could compass, uninspired:
Where we may see what errors have been made
Both in the copier's and translator's trade;
How Jewish, Popish interests have prevail'd;
And where infallibility has fail'd.
For some, who have his secret meaning guess'd,
Have found our author not too much a priest:
For fashion-sake he seems to have recourse
To pope, and councils, and tradition's force:
But he that old traditions could subdue,
Could not but find the weakness of the new.

[a] Critical History of the Old Testament by Pere Simon.

If Scripture, though derived from heavenly birth,
Has been but carelessly preserved on earth;
If God's own people, who of God before
Knew what we know, and had been promised more,
In fuller terms, of Heaven's assisting care,
And who did neither time nor study spare
To keep this Book untainted, unperplex'd—
Let in gross errors, to corrupt the text;
Omitted paragraphs, embroil'd the sense,
With vain traditions stopp'd the gaping fence,
Which every common hand pull'd up with ease—
What safety from such brushwood helps as these?
If written words from time are not secured,
How can we think have oral sounds endured?
Which, thus transmitted, if one mouth has fail'd,
Immortal lies on ages are entail'd;
And that some such have been, is proved too plain,
If we consider interest, church, and gain.
'O but,' says one, 'tradition set aside,
Where can we hope for an unerring guide?
For, since the original Scripture has been lost,
All copies disagreeing, maim'd the most—
Or Christian faith can have no certain ground,
Or truth in church tradition must be found.'
Such an omniscient church we wish indeed;
'Twere worth both Testaments, cast in the creed:
But if this mother be a guide so sure,
As can all doubts resolve, all truths secure;
Then her infallibility as well,
Where copies are corrupt or lame, can tell;
Restore lost canon with as little pains
As truly explicate what still remains;

Which yet no council dare pretend to do,
Unless, like Esdras, they could write it new.
Strange confidence! still to interpret true,
Yet not be sure that all they have explain'd
Is in the blest original contain'd!
More safe, and much more modest 'tis to say,
God would not leave mankind without a way;
And that the Scriptures, though not every where
Free from corruption, or entire, or clear;
Are uncorrupt, sufficient, clear, entire,
In all things which our needful faith require.
If others in the same glass better see,
'Tis for themselves they look, but not for me;
For my salvation must its doom receive,
Not from what others, but what I believe.
Must all tradition then be set aside?—
This to affirm were ignorance or pride.
Are there not many points, some needful, sure,
To saving faith, that Scripture leaves obscure?
Which every sect will wrest a several way;
For what one sect interprets, all sects may.
We hold, and say we prove from Scripture plain,
That Christ is God; the bold Socinian,
From the same Scripture, urges he's but man:
Now what appeal can end the important suit?
Both parts talk loudly, but the rule is mute.
Shall I speak plain, and, in a nation free,
Assume an honest layman's liberty?
I think (according to my little skill,
To my own Mother-church submitting still)
That many have been saved, and many may,
Who never heard this question brought in play.
The unletter'd Christian, who believes in gross,
Plods on to heaven, and ne'er is at a loss;

[illegible]

Thus Authority, than what from voice descends;
And this, as perfect as its kind can be,
Hath down to us the sacred history,
Which, from the universal church received,
In trial, and, after, for itself believed.

The partial Papists would infer from hence,
Their church, in last resort, should judge the sense.

But first they would assume, with wondrous art,
Themselves to be the whole, who are but part
Of that vast frame, the church: yet grant they were
The handers down, can they from thence infer
A right to interpret? or would they alone
Who brought the present, claim it for their own?
The Book's a common largess to mankind,
Not more for them than every man design'd:
The welcome news is in the letter found;
The carrier's not commission'd to expound.
It speaks itself; and what it does contain,
In all things needful to be known, is plain.
In times o'ergrown with rust and ignorance,
A gainful trade their clergy did advance;
When want of learning kept the layman low,
And none but priests were authorised to know;
When what small knowledge was in them did dwell,
And he a god who could but read or spell;
Then Mother-church did mightily prevail,
She parcell'd out the Bible by retail;
But still expounded what she sold or gave,
To keep it in her power to damn and save:
Scripture was scarce, and, as the market went,
Poor laymen took salvation on content,
As needy men take money, good or bad;
God's word they had not, but the priest's they had.
Yet, whate'er false conveyances they made,
The lawyer still was certain to be paid.
In those dark times they learn'd their knack so well,
That by long use they grew infallible:
At last, a knowing age began to inquire
If they the Book, or that did them inspire;
And, making narrower search, they found, though late,
That what they thought the priest's, was their estate;

Taught by the will produced, the written word,
How long they had been cheated on record.
Then every man, who saw the title fair,
Claim'd a child's part, and put in for a share;
Consulted soberly his private good,
And saved himself as cheap as e'er he could.
'Tis true, my friend! (and far be flattery hence)
This good had full as bad a consequence:
The Book thus put in every vulgar hand,
Which each presumed he best could understand,
The common rule was made the common prey,
And at the mercy of the rabble lay:
The tender page with horny fists was gall'd,
And he was gifted most that loudest bawl'd:
The Spirit gave the doctoral decree,
And every member of a company
Was of his trade, and of the Bible, free.
Plain truths enough for needful use they found,
But men would still be itching to expound:
Each was ambitious of the obscurest place,
No measure ta'en from knowledge, all from grace:
Study and pains were now no more their care;
Texts were explain'd by fasting and by prayer:
This was the fruit the private Spirit brought,
Occasion'd by great zeal, and little thought.
While crowds unlearn'd, with rude devotion warm,
About the sacred viands buzz and swarm,
The fly-blown text creates a crawling brood,
And turns to maggots what was meant for food.
A thousand daily sects rise up and die;
A thousand more the perish'd race supply:
So all we make of Heaven's discover'd will,
Is not to have it, or to use it ill.
The danger 's much the same, on several shelves
If others wreck us, or we wreck ourselves.

What then remains, but, waving each extreme,
The tides of ignorance and pride to stem?
Neither so rich a treasure to forego,
Nor proudly seek beyond our power to know?
Faith is not built on disquisitions vain;
The things we must believe are few and plain:
But since men will believe more than they need,
And every man will make himself a creed,
In doubtful questions 'tis the safest way
To learn what unsuspected ancients say;
For 'tis not likely we should higher soar
In search of heaven than all the church before:
Nor can we be deceived, unless we see
The Scripture and the Fathers disagree.
If, after all, they stand suspected still,
(For no man's faith depends upon his will)
'Tis some relief, that points not clearly known,
Without much hazard, may be let alone;
And, after hearing what our church can say,
If still our reason runs another way,
That private reason 'tis more just to curb,
Than by disputes the public peace disturb:
For points obscure are of small use to learn,
But common quiet is mankind's concern!
Thus have I made my own opinions clear,
Yet neither praise expect, nor censure fear;
And this unpolish'd, rugged verse I chose,
As fittest for discourse, and nearest prose:
For while from sacred truth I do not swerve,
Tom Sternhold's or Tom Shadwell's rhymes will serve.

TO MY HONOURED KINSMAN,

JOHN DRYDEN,

OF CHESTERTON, IN THE COUNTY OF HUNTINGDON, ESQ.

How bless'd is he who leads a country life,
Unvex'd with anxious cares, and void of strife!
Who, studying peace, and shunning civil rage,
Enjoy'd his youth, and now enjoys his age!
All who deserve his love he makes his own,
And, to be loved himself, needs only to be known.
Just, good, and wise, contending neighbours come,
From your award, to wait their final doom,
And, foes before, return in friendship home.
Without their cost you terminate the cause,
And save the expense of long litigious laws;
Where suits are traversed, and so little won,
That he who conquers is but last undone.
Such are not your decrees; but, so design'd,
The sanction leaves a lasting peace behind,
Like your own soul, serene, a pattern of your mind.
Promoting concord, and composing strife,
Lord of yourself, uncumber'd with a wife;
Where, for a year, a month, perhaps a night,
Long penitence succeeds a short delight:
Minds are so hardly match'd, that ev'n the first,
Though pair'd by Heaven, in Paradise were cursed:
For man and woman, though in one they grow,
Yet, first or last, return again to two:

He to God's image, she to his was made;
So farther from the fount the stream at random stray'd.
How could he stand, when, put to double pain,
He must a weaker than himself sustain?
Each might have stood, perhaps; but, each alone:
Two wrestlers help to pull each other down.
Not that my verse would blemish all the fair;
But yet, if some be bad, 'tis wisdom to beware;
And better shun the bait than struggle in the snare.
Thus have you shunn'd, and shun the married state,
Trusting as little as you can to Fate.
No porter guards the passage of your door,
To admit the wealthy, and exclude the poor;
For God, who gave the riches, gave the heart
To sanctify the whole, by giving part;
Heaven, who foresaw the will, the means has wrought,
And to the second son a blessing brought:
The first-begotten had his father's share;
But you, like Jacob, are Rebecca's heir.
So may your stores and fruitful fields increase;
And ever be you bless'd, who live to bless.
As Ceres sow'd, where'er her chariot flew;
As Heaven in deserts rain'd the bread of dew;
So, free to many, to relations most,
You feed with manna your own Israel host.
With crowds attended, of your ancient race,
You seek the champaign sports or sylvan chase;
With well-breathed beagles you surround the wood,
Ev'n then industrious of the common good;
And often have you brought the wily fox
To suffer for the firstlings of the flocks;

Chased ev'n amid the folds, and made to bleed,
Like felons, where they did the murderous deed.
This fiery game your active youth maintain'd,
Not yet by years extinguish'd, though restrain'd:
You season still with sports your serious hours;
For age but tastes of pleasures, youth devours.
The hare in pastures or in plains is found,
Emblem of human life, who runs the round,
And, after all his wandering ways are done,
His circle fills, and ends where he begun,
Just as the setting meets the rising sun.
Thus princes ease their cares; but happier he
Who seeks not pleasure through necessity,
Than such as once on slippery thrones were placed,
And, chasing, sigh to think themselves are chased.
So lived our sires, ere doctors learn'd to kill,
And multiplied with theirs the weekly bill.
The first physicians by debauch were made;
Excess began, and sloth sustains the trade.
Pity the generous kind their cares bestow
To search forbidden truths (a sin to know);
To which if human science could attain,
The doom of death, pronounced by God, were vain:
In vain the leech would interpose delay;
Fate fastens first, and vindicates the prey.
What help from Art's endeavours can we have?
Gibbons[1] but guesses, nor is sure to save;
But Maurus sweeps whole parishes, and peoples every grave,
And no more mercy to mankind will use,
Than when he robb'd and murder'd Maro's Muse.

[1] Dr. W. Gibbons succeeded Ratcliffe as physician to Queen Anne, and died March 25, 1728.

Wouldst thou be soon despatch'd, and perish whole?
Trust Maurus with thy life, and Milbourn[9] with thy soul.

By chase our long-lived fathers earn'd their food,
Toil strung the nerves, and purified the blood;
But we, their sons, a pamper'd race of men,
Are dwindled down to threescore years and ten.
Better to hunt in fields for health unbought,
Than fee the doctor for a nauseous draught.
The wise, for cure, on exercise depend:
God never made his work for man to mend.

The tree of Knowledge, once in Eden placed,
Was easy found, but was forbid the taste:
O, had our grandsire walk'd without his wife,
He first had sought the better plant of Life!
Now both are lost; yet, wandering in the dark,
Physicians, for the tree, have found the bark:
They, labouring for relief of human kind,
With sharpen'd sight some remedies may find:
The apothecary-train is wholly blind;
From files a random recipe they take,
And many deaths of one prescription make.
Garth, generous as his Muse, prescribes and gives;
The shopman sells, and by destruction lives.
Ungrateful tribe! who, like the viper's brood,
From medicine issuing, suck their mother's blood!
Let these obey, and let the learn'd prescribe,
That men may die without a double bribe;
Let them, but under their superiors, kill,
When doctors first have sign'd the bloody bill:
He 'scapes the best, who, nature to repair,
Draws physic from the fields in draughts of vital air.

[9] The Rev. Luke Milbourn wrote notes on Dryden's Virgil, &c. and died April 15, 1720.

You hoard not health for your own private use,
But on the public spend the rich produce.
When, often urged, unwilling to be great,
Your country calls you from your loved retreat,
And sends to senates, charged with common care,
Which none more shuns, and none can better bear—
Where could they find another form'd so fit
To poise, with solid sense, a sprightly wit?
Were these both wanting, as they both abound,
Where could so firm integrity be found?
Well-born, and wealthy, wanting no support,
You steer betwixt the country and the court;
Nor gratify whate'er the great desire,
Nor, grudging, give what public needs require.
Part must be left, a fund, when foes invade,
And part employ'd to roll the watery trade:
Ev'n Canaan's happy land, when worn with toil,
Required a sabbath-year to mend the meagre soil.
Good senators (and such as you) so give,
That kings may be supplied, the people thrive:
And he, when want requires, is truly wise,
Who slights not foreign aids, nor overbuys,
But on our native strength in time of need relies.
Munster was bought; we boast not the success;
Who fights for gain, for greater makes his peace.
Our foes, compell'd by need, have peace embraced:
The peace both parties want is like to last;
Which, if secure, securely we may trade;
Or, not secure, should never have been made.
Safe in ourselves, while on ourselves we stand,
The sea is ours, and that defends the land.
Be, then, the naval stores the nation's care,
New ships to build, and batter'd to repair.

Observe the war in every annual course;
What has been done was done with British force.
Namur subdued is England's palm alone;
The rest besieged, but we constrain'd the town.
We saw the event that follow'd our success;
France, through pretending arms, pursued the peace;
Obliged, by one sole treaty, to restore
What twenty years of war had won before.
Enough for Europe has our Albion fought;
Let us enjoy the peace our blood has bought.
When once the Persian king was put to flight,
The weary Macedons refused to fight;
Themselves their own mortality confess'd,
And left the son of Jove to quarrel for the rest.
Ev'n victors are by victories undone;
Thus Hannibal, with foreign laurels won,
To Carthage was recall'd, too late to keep his own.
While sore of battle, while our wounds are green,
Why should we tempt the doubtful die again?
In wars renew'd, uncertain of success;
Sure of a share, as umpires of the peace.
A patriot both the king and country serves,
Prerogative and privilege preserves;
Of each our laws the certain limit show;
One must not ebb, nor t'other overflow:
Betwixt the prince and parliament we stand,
The barriers of the state on either hand;
May neither overflow, for then they drown the land!
When both are full, they feed our bless'd abode,
Like those that water'd once the paradise of God.
Some overpoise of sway, by turns, they share;
In peace, the people; and the prince, in war:
Consuls of moderate power in calms were made;
When the Gauls came, one sole dictator sway'd.

Patriots in peace assert the people's right,
With noble stubbornness resisting might;
No lawless mandates from the court receive,
Nor lend by force, but in a body give.
Such was your generous grandsire; free to grant,
In parliaments that weigh'd their prince's want;
But so tenacious of the common cause,
As not to lend the king against his laws;
And, in a loathsome dungeon doom'd to lie,
In bonds retain'd his birth-right liberty,
And shamed Oppression till it set him free.
O true descendant of a patriot line!
Who, while thou sharest their lustre, lend'st them thine,
Vouchsafe this picture of thy soul to see;
'Tis so far good as it resembles thee;
The beauties to the original I owe,
Which, when I miss, my own defects I show:
Nor think the kindred Muses thy disgrace;
A poet is not born in every race:
Two of a house few ages can afford,
One to perform, another to record.
Praise-worthy actions are by thee embraced,
And 'tis my praise to make thy praises last:
For ev'n when death dissolves our human frame,
The soul returns to heaven, from whence it came;
Earth keeps the body, Verse preserves the fame.

TO

SIR GODFREY KNELLER,

PRINCIPAL PAINTER TO HIS MAJESTY.

ONCE I beheld the fairest of her kind,
And still the sweet idea charms my mind:
True, she was dumb; for Nature gazed so long,
Pleased with her work, that she forgot her tongue;
But, smiling, said, 'She still shall gain the prize;
I only have transferr'd it to her eyes.'
Such are thy pictures, Kneller! such thy skill,
That Nature seems obedient to thy will;
Comes out, and meets thy pencil in the draught;
Lives there, and wants but words to speak her thought.
At least, thy pictures look a voice, and we
Imagine sounds; deceived to that degree,
We think 'tis somewhat more than just to see.
Shadows are but privations of the light,
Yet, when we walk, they shoot before the sight;
With us approach, retire, arise, and fall;
Nothing themselves, and yet expressing all.
Such are thy pieces, imitating life
So near, they almost conquer in the strife;
And from their animated canvass came,
Demanding souls, and loosen'd from the frame.
Prometheus, were he here, would cast away
His Adam, and refuse a soul to clay;
And either would thy nobler work inspire,
Or think it warm enough without his fire.

But vulgar hands may vulgar likeness raise;
This is the least attendant on thy praise:
From hence the rudiments of Art began;
A coal, or chalk, first imitated man:
Perhaps the shadow, taken on a wall,
Gave outlines to the rude original—
Ere canvass yet was stain'd, before the grace
Of blended colours found their use and place,
Or cypress tablets first received a face.

By slow degrees the godlike Art advanced;
As man grew polish'd, picture was enhanced:
Greece added posture, shade, and perspective,
And then the mimic-piece began to live.
Yet perspective was lame, no distance true,
But all came forward in one common view:
No point of light was known, no bounds of art;
When light was there, it knew not to depart;
But glaring, on remoter objects play'd,
Not languish'd, and insensibly decay'd.

Rome raised not Art, but barely kept alive,
And with old Greece unequally did strive;
Till Goths and Vandals, a rude northern race,
Did all the matchless monuments deface:
Then all the Muses in one ruin lie,
And rhyme began to enervate poetry.
Thus, in a stupid military state,
The pen and pencil find an equal fate:
Flat faces, such as would disgrace a screen,
Such as in Bantam's embassy were seen,
Unraised, unrounded, were the rude delight
Of brutal nations, only born to fight.

Long time the Sister Arts, in iron sleep,
A heavy sabbath did supinely keep;

At length, in Raphael's age, at once they rise,
Stretch all their limbs, and open all their eyes.
Thence rose the Roman and the Lombard line;
One colour'd best, and one did best design.
Raphael's, like Homer's, was the nobler part;
But Titian's painting look'd like Virgil's art.
Thy genius gives thee both: where true design,
Postures unforced, and lively colours join,
Likeness is ever there; but still the best,
Like proper thoughts in lofty language dress'd;
Where light, to shades descending, plays, not strives,
Dies by degrees, and by degrees revives.
Of various parts a perfect whole is wrought:
Thy pictures think, and we divine their thought.
Shakspeare! thy gift I place before my sight;
With awe I ask his blessing ere I write;
With reverence look on his majestic face,
Proud to be less, but of his godlike race.
His soul inspires me while thy praise I write,
And I, like Teucer, under Ajax fight:
Bids thee, through me, be bold; with dauntless breast
Contemn the bad, and emulate the best.
Like his, thy critics in the attempt are lost;
When most they rail, know, then they envy most.
In vain they snarl aloof; a noisy crowd,
Like women's anger, impotent and loud.
While they their barren industry deplore,
Pass on secure, and mind the goal before.
Old as she is, my Muse shall march behind,
Bear off the blast, and intercept the wind.
Our arts are sisters, though not twins in birth;
For hymns were sung in Eden's happy earth:

But, O, the painter-muse, though last in place,
Has seized the blessing first, like Jacob's race.
Apelles' art an Alexander found,
And Raphael did with Leo's gold abound,
But Homer was with barren laurel crown'd.
Thou hadst thy Charles awhile, and so had I;
But pass we that unpleasing image by.
Rich in thyself, and of thyself divine,
All pilgrims come and offer at thy shrine.
A graceful truth thy pencil can command;
The fair themselves go mended from thy hand:
Likeness appears in every lineament;
But likeness in thy work is eloquent.
Though Nature there her true resemblance bears,
A nobler beauty in thy piece appears.
So warm thy work, so glows the generous frame,
Flesh looks less living in the lovely dame:
Thou paint'st as we describe, improving still,
When on wild Nature we engraft our skill,
But not creating beauties at our will.
But poets are confined, in narrower space,
To speak the language of their native place:
The painter widely stretches his command;
Thy pencil speaks the tongue of every land.
From hence, my friend! all climates are your own,
Nor can you forfeit, for you hold of none.
All nations all immunities will give
To make you theirs, where'er you please to live;
And not seven cities, but the world, would strive.
Sure some propitious planet then did smile,
When first you were conducted to this isle:
Our Genius brought you here, to enlarge our fame;
For your good stars are every where the same.

Thy matchless hand, of every region free,
Adopts our climate, not our climate thee.
Great Rome and Venice early did impart
To thee the examples of their wondrous art.
Those masters then, but seen, not understood,
With generous emulation fired thy blood:
For what, in Nature's dawn, the child admired,
The youth endeavour'd, and the man acquired.
If yet thou hast not reach'd their high degree,
'Tis only wanting to this age, not thee.
Thy genius, bounded by the times, like mine,
Drudges on petty draughts, nor dares design
A more exalted work, and more divine.
For what a song, or senseless opera,
Is to the living labour of a play;
Or what a play to Virgil's work would be—
Such is a single piece to History.
But we, who life bestow, ourselves must live:
Kings cannot reign, unless their subjects give;
And they who pay the taxes bear the rule:
Thus thou, sometimes, art forced to draw a fool;
But so his follies in thy posture sink,
The senseless idiot seems at last to think.
Good Heaven! that sots and knaves should be so vain,
To wish their vile resemblance may remain;
And stand recorded, at their own request,
To future days, a libel or a jest!
Else should we see your noble pencil trace
Our unities of action, time, and place;
A whole composed of parts, and those the best,
With every various character express'd:
Heroes at large, and at a nearer view;
Less, and at distance, an ignobler crew;

While all the figures in one action join,
As tending to complete the main design.
More cannot be by mortal Art express'd;
But venerable Age shall add the rest:
For Time shall with his ready pencil stand,
Retouch your figures with his ripening hand,
Mellow your colours, and embrown the teint,
Add every grace which Time alone can grant;
To future ages shall your fame convey,
And give more beauties than he takes away.



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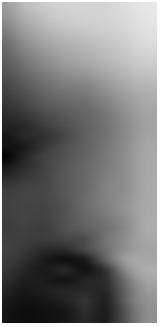


DRYDEN.

PALAMON AND ARCITE;

AND

SIGISMONDA AND GUISCARDO.



DRYDEN.

PALEMON AND ARCITE,

ETC.



And thrust among the thorns her lily hand,
To draw the rose. ——— Book I.

W. Greatbatch sc

PUBLISHED [illegible] LONDON



PALAMON AND ARCITE;

OR,

THE KNIGHT'S TALE.

BOOK I.

In days of old there lived of mighty fame
A valiant prince, and Theseus was his name:
A chief who more in feats of arms excell'd
The rising nor the setting sun beheld:
Of Athens he was lord; much land he won,
And added foreign countries to his crown:
In Scythia with the warrior-queen he strove,
Whom first by force he conquer'd, then by love;
He brought in triumph back the beauteous dame,
With whom her sister, fair Emilia, came.
With honour to his home let Theseus ride,
With love to friend, and fortune for his guide,
And his victorious army at his side.
I pass their warlike pomp, their proud array,
Their shouts, their songs, their welcome on the way:
But were it not too long, I would recite
The feats of Amazons, the fatal fight
Betwixt the hardy queen and hero knight;
The town besieged, and how much blood it cost
The female army and the Athenian host;

The spousals of Hippolita, the queen;
What tilts and tourneys at the feast were seen;
The storm, at their return, the ladies' fear:—
But these, and other things, I must forbear.
The field is spacious I design to sow,
With oxen, far unfit to draw the plough:
The remnant of my tale is of a length
To tire your patience, and to waste my strength;
And trivial accidents shall be forborne,
That others may have time to take their turn;
As was at first enjoin'd us by mine host;
That he, whose tale is best and pleases most,
Should win his supper at our common cost.
And therefore, where I left I will pursue
This ancient story, whether false or true,
In hope it may be mended with a new.
The prince I mention'd, full of high renown,
In this array drew near the Athenian town;
When in his pomp, and utmost of his pride,
Marching, he chanced to cast his eye aside,
And saw a choir of mourning dames, who lay
By two and two across the common way:
At his approach they raised a rueful cry,
And beat their breasts, and held their hands on high,
Creeping and crying, till they seized at last
His courser's bridle, and his feet embraced.
'Tell me,' said Theseus, 'what and whence you are,
And why this funeral pageant you prepare?
Is this the welcome of my worthy deeds,
To meet my triumph in ill-omen'd weeds?
Or envy you my praise, and would destroy
With grief my pleasures, and pollute my joy?
Or are you injured, and demand relief?
Name your request, and I will ease your grief.'

The most in years of all the mourning train
Began (but swooned first away for pain);
Then scarce recover'd, spoke: 'Nor envy we
Thy great renown, nor grudge thy victory;
'Tis thine, O king! the afflicted to redress,
And fame has fill'd the world with thy success:
We, wretched women, sue for that alone
Which of thy goodness is refused to none:
Let fall some drops of pity on our grief,
If what we beg be just, and we deserve relief:
For none of us, who now thy grace implore,
But held the rank of sovereign-queen before;
Till, thanks to giddy chance, which never bears
That mortal bliss should last for length of years,
She cast us headlong from our high estate,
And here in hope of thy return we wait;
And long have waited in the temple nigh,
Built to the gracious goddess Clemency.
But reverence thou the power whose name it bears,
Relieve the oppress'd, and wipe the widow's tears;
I, wretched I, have other fortune seen,
The wife of Capaneus, and once a queen:
At Thebes he fell; cursed be the fatal day!
And all the rest thou seest in this array,
To make their moan, their lords in battle lost
Before that town besieged by our confederate host:
But Creon, old and impious, who commands
The Theban city, and usurps the lands,
Denies the rites of funeral fires to those
Whose breathless bodies yet he calls his foes.
Unburn'd, unburied, on a heap they lie;
Such is their fate, and such his tyranny;
No friend has leave to bear away the dead,
But with their lifeless limbs his hounds are fed.'

At this she shriek'd aloud; the mournful train
Echo'd her grief, and groveling on the plain
With groans, and hands upheld, to move his mind,
Besought his pity to their helpless kind!
The prince was touch'd, his tears began to flow,
And, as his tender heart would break in two,
He sigh'd; and could not but their fate deplore,
So wretched now, so fortunate before.
Then lightly from his lofty steed he flew,
And raising one by one the suppliant crew,
To comfort each, full solemnly he swore,
That by the faith which knights to knighthood bore,
And whate'er else to chivalry belongs,
He would not cease, till he revenged their wrongs;
That Greece should see perform'd what he declared,
And cruel Creon find his just reward.
He said no more, but, shunning all delay,
Rode on; nor enter'd Athens on his way:
But left his sister and his queen behind,
And waved his royal banner in the wind;
Where in an argent field the god of war
Was drawn triumphant on his iron car;
Red was his sword and shield, and whole attire,
And all the godhead seem'd to glow with fire;
Ev'n the ground glitter'd where the standard flew,
And the green grass was dyed to sanguine hue.
High on his pointed lance his pennon bore
His Cretan fight, the conquer'd Minotaur:
The soldiers shout around with generous rage,
And in that victory their own presage.
He praised their ardour: inly pleased to see
His host, the flower of Grecian chivalry.
All day he march'd, and all the ensuing night,
And saw the city with returning light.

The process of the war I need not tell,—
How Theseus conquer'd, and how Creon fell:
Or after, how by storm the walls were won,
Or how the victor sack'd and burn'd the town:
How to the ladies he restored again
The bodies of their lords in battle slain:
And with what ancient rites they were interr'd:
All these to fitter time shall be deferr'd.
I spare the widows' tears, their woful cries,
And howling at their husbands' obsequies;
How Theseus at these funerals did assist,
And with what gifts the mourning dames dismiss'd.
Thus when the victor-chief had Creon slain,
And conquer'd Thebes, he pitch'd upon the plain
His mighty camp, and when the day return'd,
The country wasted, and the hamlets burn'd;
And left the pillagers, to rapine bred,
Without control to strip and spoil the dead.
There, in a heap of slain, among the rest,
Two youthful knights they found, beneath a load oppress'd
Of slaughter'd foes, whom first to death they sent,
The trophies of their strength, a bloody monument.
Both fair, and both of royal blood they seem'd,
Whom kinsmen to the crown the heralds deem'd;
That day in equal arms they fought for fame;
Their swords, their shields, their surcoats were the same.
Close by each other laid they press'd the ground;
Their manly bosoms pierced with many a grisly wound;
Nor well alive nor wholly dead they were,
But some faint signs of feeble life appear:

The wandering breath was on the wing to part,
Weak was the pulse, and hardly heaved the heart.
These two were sisters' sons; and Arcite one,
Much famed in fields, with valiant Palamon.
From these their costly arms the spoilers rent,
And softly both convey'd to Theseus' tent;
Whom known of Creon's line, and cured with care,
He to his city sent, as prisoners of the war,
Hopeless of ransom, and condemn'd to lie
In durance, doom'd a lingering death to die.
This done, he march'd away with warlike sound,
And to his Athens turn'd with laurels crown'd,
Where happy long he lived, much loved, and more renown'd.
But in a tower, and never to be loosed,
The woful captive kinsmen are enclosed.
Thus year by year they pass, and day by day,
Till once ('twas on the morn of cheerful May)
The young Emilia, fairer to be seen
Than the fair lily on the flowery green,
More fresh than May herself in blossoms new
(For with the rosy colour strove her hue),
Waked, as her custom was, before the day,
To do the observance due to sprightly May;
For sprightly May commands our youth to keep
The vigils of her night, and break their sluggard sleep.
Each gentle breast with kindly warmth she moves,
Inspires new flames, revives extinguish'd loves;
In this remembrance Emily ere day
Arose, and dress'd herself in rich array;
Fresh as the month, and as the morning fair:
Adown her shoulders fell her length of hair;
A riband did the braided tresses bind;
The rest was loose, and wanton'd in the wind.

Aurora had but newly chased the night,
And purpled o'er the sky with blushing light,
When to the garden-walk she took her way,
To sport and trip along in cool of day,
And offer maiden vows in honour of the May.
At every turn she made a little stand,
And thrust among the thorns her lily hand
To draw the rose, and every rose she drew
She shook the stalk, and brush'd away the dew:
Then party-colour'd flowers of white and red
She wove, to make a garland for her head:
This done, she sung and caroll'd out so clear,
That men and angels might rejoice to hear:
Ev'n wondering Philomel forgot to sing,
And learn'd from her to welcome in the spring.
The tower, of which before was mention made,
Within whose keep the captive knights were laid,
Built of a large extent, and strong withal,
Was one partition of the palace-wall:
The garden was enclosed, within the square,
Where young Emilia took the morning air.
It happen'd, Palamon, the prisoner knight,
Restless for woe, arose before the light,
And, with his jailor's leave, desired to breathe
An air more wholesome than the damps beneath.
This granted, to the tower he took his way,
Cheer'd with the promise of a glorious day;
Then cast a languishing regard around,
And saw with hateful eyes the temples crown'd
With golden spires, and all the hostile ground.
He sigh'd, and turn'd his eyes, because he knew
'Twas but a larger jail he had in view:
Then look'd below, and from the castle's height
Beheld a nearer and more pleasing sight:

The garden, which before he had not seen,
In spring's new livery clad of white and green,
Fresh flowers in wide parterres, and shady walks between.
This view'd, but not enjoy'd, with arms across
He stood, reflecting on his country's loss;
Himself an object of the public scorn,
And often wish'd he never had been born.
At last (for so his destiny required)
With walking giddy, and with thinking tired,
He through a little window cast his sight,
Though thick of bars, that gave a scanty light:
But ev'n that glimmering served him to descry
The inevitable charms of Emily.
Scarce had he seen, but seized with sudden smart,
Stung to the quick, he felt it at his heart;
Struck blind with overpowering light he stood,
Then started back amazed, and cried aloud!
Young Arcite heard; and up he ran with haste
To help his friend, and in his arms embraced;
And ask'd him why he look'd so deadly wan,
And whence and how his change of cheer began?
Or who had done the offence? 'But if,' said he,
'Your grief alone is hard captivity;
For love of Heaven, with patience undergo
A cureless ill, since fate will have it so:
So stood our horoscope in chains to lie,
And Saturn, in the dungeon of the sky,
Or other baleful aspect, ruled our birth,
When all the friendly stars were under earth:
Whate'er betides, by destiny 'tis done,
And better bear like men, than vainly seek to shun.'
'Nor of my bonds,' said Palamon again,
'Nor of unhappy planets I complain;

But when my mortal anguish caused my cry,
That moment I was hurt through either eye;
Pierced with a random shaft, I faint away,
And perish with insensible decay:
A glance of some new goddess gave the wound,
Whom, like Actæon, unaware I found.
Look how she walks along yon shady space,
Not Juno moves with more majestic grace;
And all the Cyprian queen is in her face.
If thou art Venus, (for thy charms confess
That face was form'd in heaven) nor art thou less;
Disguised in habit, undisguised in shape,
O help us captives from our chains to 'scape!
But if our doom be past, in bonds to lie
For life, and in a loathsome dungeon die,
Then be thy wrath appeased with our disgrace,
And show compassion to the Theban race,
Oppress'd by tyrant power!' While yet he spoke,
Arcite on Emily had fix'd his look;
The fatal dart a ready passage found,
And deep within his heart infix'd the wound:
So that if Palamon were wounded sore,
Arcite was hurt as much as he or more:
Then from his inmost soul he sigh'd, and said,
'The beauty I behold, has struck me dead:
Unknowingly she strikes, and kills by chance:
Poison is in her eyes, and death in every glance.
O! I must ask; nor ask alone, but move
Her mind to mercy, or must die for love!'
Thus Arcite: and thus Palamon replies:
(Eager his tone, and ardent were his eyes)
'Speak'st thou in earnest, or in jesting vein?'
'Jesting,' said Arcite, 'suits but ill with pain.'
'It suits far worse,' said Palamon again,

And bent his brows, 'with men who honor weigh,
Their faith to break, their friendship to betray;
But worst with thee, of noble lineage born,
My kinsman, and in arms my brother sworn.
Have we not plighted each our holy oath,
That one should be the common good of both?
One soul should both inspire, and neither prove
His fellow's hinderance in pursuit of love?
To this before the gods we gave our hands,
And nothing but our death can break the bands.
This binds thee, then, to further my design;
As I am bound by vow to further thine:
Nor canst, nor darest thou, traitor, on the plain
Appeach my honour, or thy own maintain;
Since thou art of my council, and the friend
Whose faith I trust, and on whose care depend!
And wouldst thou court my lady's love, which I,
Much rather than release, would choose to die?
But thou, false Arcite, never shalt obtain
Thy bad pretence; I told thee first my pain:
For first my love began ere thine was born:
Thou, as my council, and my brother sworn,
Art bound to assist my eldership of right,
Or justly to be deem'd a perjured knight.'
Thus Palamon. But Arcite, with disdain,
In haughty language thus replied again:
'Forsworn thyself: the traitor's odious name
I first return, and then disprove thy claim.
If love be passion, and that passion nursed
With strong desires, I loved the lady first.
Canst thou pretend desire, whom zeal inflamed
To worship, and a power celestial named?
Thine was devotion to the bless'd above;
I saw the woman, and desired her love;

First own'd my passion, and to thee commend
The important secret, as my chosen friend.
Suppose, (which yet I grant not) thy desire
A moment elder than my rival fire;
Can chance of seeing first thy title prove?
And know'st thou not, no law is made for love?
Law is to things which to free choice relate;
Love is not in our choice, but in our fate.
Laws are but positive: Love's power, we see,
Is Nature's sanction, and her first decree.
Each day we break the bond of human laws
For love, and vindicate the common cause.
Laws for defence of civil rights are placed,
Love throws the fences down, and makes a general waste:
Maids, widows, wives, without distinction fall;
The sweeping deluge, Love, comes on and covers all.
If then the laws of friendship I transgress,
I keep the greater, while I break the less;
And both are mad alike, since neither can possess.
Both hopeless to be ransomed, never more
To see the sun, but as he passes o'er.'
Like Æsop's hounds contending for the bone,
Each pleaded right, and would be lord alone;
The fruitless fight continued all the day;
A cur came by, and snatch'd the prize away:
As courtiers therefore justle for a grant, [want,
And when they break their friendship, plead their
'So thou, if fortune will thy suit advance,
Love on, nor envy me my equal chance:
For I must love, and am resolved to try
My fate, or, failing in the adventure, die!'
Great was their strife, which hourly was renew'd,
Till each with mortal hate his rival view'd:

Now friends no more, nor walking hand in hand;
But when they met, they made a surly stand;
And glared like angry lions as they pass'd,
And wish'd that every look might be their last.
It chanced at length, Pirithous came, to attend
This worthy Theseus, his familiar friend:
Their love in early infancy began,
And rose as childhood ripen'd into man.
Companions of the war; and loved so well,
That when one died, as ancient stories tell,
His fellow, to redeem him, went to hell.
But to pursue my tale; to welcome home
His warlike brother is Pirithous come:
Arcite of Thebes was known in arms long since,
And honour'd by this young Thessalian prince.
Theseus, to gratify his friend and guest,
Who made our Arcite's freedom his request,
Restored to liberty the captive knight,
But on these hard conditions I recite:—
That if hereafter Arcite should be found
Within the compass of Athenian ground,
By day or night, or on whate'er pretence,
His head should pay the forfeit of the offence.
To this, Pirithous, for his friend, agreed,
And on his promise was the prisoner freed.
Unpleased and pensive, hence he takes his way,
At his own peril; for his life must pay.
Who now but Arcite mourns his bitter fate,
Finds his dear purchase, and repents too late?
'What have I gain'd,' he said, 'in prison pent,
If I but change my bonds for banishment?
And banish'd from her sight, I suffer more
In freedom, than I felt in bonds before;

Forced from her presence, and condemn'd to live,
Unwelcome freedom, and unthank'd reprieve!
Heaven is not but where Emily abides;
And where she's absent, all is hell besides.
Next to my day of birth, was that accurst
Which bound my friendship to Pirithous first:
Had I not known that prince, I still had been
In bondage, and had still Emilia seen:
For though I never can her grace deserve,
'Tis recompense enough to see and serve.
O Palamon, my kinsman and my friend,
How much more happy fates thy love attend!
Thine is the adventure; thine the victory:
Well has thy fortune turn'd the dice for thee:
Thou on that angel's face mayst feed thy eyes,
In prison, no; but blissful paradise!
Thou daily seest that sun of beauty shine,
And lovest at least in love's extremest line.
I mourn in absence, love's eternal night:
And who can tell, but since thou hast her sight,
And art a comely, young, and valiant knight,
Fortune (a various power) may cease to frown,
And by some ways unknown thy wishes crown?
But I, the most forlorn of human kind,
Nor help can hope nor remedy can find;
But doom'd to drag my loathsome life in care,
For my reward, must end it in despair.
Fire, water, air, and earth, and force of fates
That governs all, and Heaven that all creates,
Nor art nor nature's hand can ease my grief;
Nothing but death, the wretch's last relief:
Then farewell youth, and all the joys that dwell
With youth and life, and life itself, farewell!
'But why, alas! do mortal men in vain
Of fortune, fate, or Providence complain?

God gives us what he knows our wants require,
And better things than those which we desire:
Some pray for riches; riches they obtain;
But watch'd by robbers, for their wealth are slain:
Some pray from prison to be freed; and come,
When guilty of their vows, to fall at home;
Murder'd by those they trusted with their life,
A favour'd servant, or a bosom wife.
Such dear-bought blessings happen every day,
Because we know not for what things to pray.
Like drunken sots about the streets we roam:
Well knows the sot he has a certain home,
Yet knows not how to find the uncertain place,
And blunders on, and staggers every pace.
Thus all seek happiness; but few can find,
For far the greater part of men are blind.
This is my case, who thought our utmost good
Was in one word of freedom understood:
The fatal blessing came: from prison free,
I starve abroad, and lose the sight of Emily!'
Thus Arcite; but if Arcite thus deplore
His sufferings, Palamon yet suffers more.
For when he knew his rival freed and gone,
He swells with wrath; he makes outrageous moan:
He frets, he fumes, he stares, he stamps the ground;
The hollow tower with clamours rings around:
With briny tears he bathed his fetter'd feet,
And dropp'd all o'er with agony of sweat.
'Alas!' he cried, 'I wretch in prison pine,
Too happy rival, while the fruit is thine:
Thou livest at large, thou draw'st thy native air,
Pleased with thy freedom, proud of my despair.
Thou mayst, since thou hast youth and courage join'd,
A sweet behaviour, and a solid mind,

Assemble ours, and all the Theban race,
To vindicate on Athens thy disgrace:
And after (by some treaty made) possess
Fair Emily, the pledge of lasting peace:
So thine shall be the beauteous prize; while I
Must languish in despair, in prison die.
Thus all the advantage of the strife is thine,
Thy portion double joys, and double sorrows mine.'

The rage of jealousy then fired his soul,
And his face kindled like a burning coal:
Now cold despair, succeeding in its stead,
To livid paleness turns the glowing red.
His blood, scarce liquid, creeps within his veins,
Like water which the freezing wind constrains.
Then thus he said:—'Eternal deities!
Who rule the world with absolute decrees,
And write, whatever time shall bring to pass,
With pens of adamant on plates of brass;
What, is the race of human kind your care,
Beyond what all his fellow-creatures are?
He, with the rest, is liable to pain;
And, like the sheep, his brother-beast, is slain.
Cold, hunger, prisons, ills without a cure,
All these he must, and guiltless oft, endure:
Or does your justice, power, or prescience fail,
When the good suffer, and the bad prevail?
What worse to wretched virtue could befal,
If fate or giddy fortune govern'd all?
Nay, worse than other beasts is our estate;
Them, to pursue their pleasures, you create:
We, bound by harder laws, must curb our will,
And your commands, not our desires, fulfil:
Then, when the creature is unjustly slain,
Yet, after death at least, he feels no pain;

But man, in life surcharged with woe before,
Not freed when dead, is doom'd to suffer more.
A serpent shoots his sting at unaware;
An ambush'd thief forelays a traveller:
The man lies murder'd, while the thief and snake,
One gains the thickets, and one thrids the brake.
This let divines decide; but well I know,
Just, or unjust, I have my share of woe,
Through Saturn, seated in a luckless place,
And Juno's wrath, that persecutes my race;
Or Mars and Venus, in a quartile, move
My pangs of jealousy for Arcite's love!'
Let Palamon, oppress'd in bondage, mourn,
While to his exiled rival we return.
By this the sun, declining from his height,
The day had shorten'd to prolong the night:
The lengthen'd night gave length of misery
Both to the captive lover and the free.
For Palamon, in endless prison mourns,
And Arcite forfeits life if he returns.
The banished never hopes his love to see,
Nor hopes the captive lord his liberty.
'Tis hard to say who suffers greater pains;
One sees his love, but cannot break his chains;
One free, and all his motions uncontroll'd,
Beholds whate'er he would, but what he would
behold.
Judge as you please, for I will haste to tell
What fortune to the banish'd knight befel.—
When Arcite was to Thebes return'd again,
The loss of her he loved renew'd his pain.
What could be worse, than never more to see
His life, his soul, his charming Emily?
He raved with all the madness of despair,
He roar'd, he beat his breast, he tore his hair.



Dry sorrow in his stupid eyes appears,
For wanting nourishment, he wanted tears:
His eye-balls in their hollow sockets sink;
Bereft of sleep, he loathes his meat and drink.
He withers at his heart, and looks as wan
As the pale spectre of a murder'd man;
That pale turns yellow, and his face receives
The faded hue of sapless boxen leaves:
In solitary groves he makes his moan,
Walks early out, and ever is alone:
Nor mix'd in mirth, in youthful pleasure shares,
But sighs, when songs and instruments he hears:
His spirits are so low, his voice is drown'd,
He hears as from afar, or in a swoon,
Like the deaf murmurs of a distant sound:
Uncomb'd his locks, and squalid his attire,
Unlike the trim of love and gay desire;
But full of museful mopings, which presage
The loss of reason, and conclude in rage.
This, when he had endured a year or more,
Now wholly changed from what he was before,
It happen'd once, that slumbering as he lay,
He dreamt (his dream began at break of day)
That Hermes o'er his head in air appear'd,
And with soft words his drooping spirits cheer'd:
His hat, adorn'd with wings, disclosed the god,
And in his hand he bore the sleep-compelling rod:
Such as he seem'd, when at his sire's command
On Argus' head he laid the snaky wand.
'Arise!' he said, 'to conquering Athens go;
There fate appoints an end of all thy woe!'
The fright awaken'd Arcite with a start,
Against his bosom bounced his heaving heart;

But soon he said, with scarce recover'd breath,
'And thither will I go, to meet my death,
Sure to be slain; but death is my desire,
Since in Emilia's sight I shall expire!'
By chance he spied a mirror while he spoke,
And, gazing there, beheld his alter'd look:
Wondering, he saw his features and his hue
So much were changed, that scarce himself he knew.
A sudden thought then starting in his mind;
'Since I in Arcite cannot Arcite find,
The world may search in vain with all their eyes,
But never penetrate through this disguise.
Thanks to the change which grief and sickness give,
In low estate I may securely live,
And see, unknown, my mistress day by day.'
He said; and clothed himself in coarse array:
A labouring hind in show; then forth he went,
And to the Athenian towers his journey bent:
One squire attended, in the same disguise,
Made conscious of his master's enterprise.
Arrived at Athens, soon he came to court,
Unknown, unquestion'd, in that thick resort;
Proffering for hire his service at the gate,
To drudge, draw water, and to run or wait.
So fair befel him, that for little gain
He served at first Emilia's chamberlain;
And watchful all advantages to spy,
Was still at hand, and in his master's eye;
And as his bones were big, and sinews strong,
Refused no toil that could to slaves belong:
But from deep wells with engines water drew,
And used his noble hands the wood to hew.

He pass'd a year at least, attending thus
On Emily, and called Philostratus.
But never was there man of his degree
So much esteem'd, so well beloved as he.
So gentle of condition was he known,
That through the court his courtesy was blown:
All think him worthy of a greater place,
And recommend him to the royal grace;
That, exercised within a higher sphere,
His virtues more conspicuous might appear.
Thus, by the general voice was Arcite praised,
And by great Theseus to high favour raised;
Among his menial servants first enroll'd,
And largely entertain'd with sums of gold;
Besides what secretly from Thebes was sent
Of his own income, and his annual rent:
This well employ'd, he purchased friends and fame,
But cautiously conceal'd from whence it came.
Thus, for three years, he lived with large increase,
In arms, of honour; and esteem, in peace.
To Theseus' person he was ever near,
And Theseus, for his virtues, held him dear.

PALAMON AND ARCITE;

OR,

THE KNIGHT'S TALE.

BOOK II.

WHILE Arcite lives in bliss, the story turns
Where hopeless Palamon in prison mourns.
For six long years immured, the captive knight
Had dragg'd his chains, and scarcely seen the light:
Lost liberty and love at once he bore;
His prison pain'd him much, his passion more:
Nor dares he hope his fetters to remove,
Nor ever wishes to be free from love.
But when the sixth revolving year was run,
And May, within the Twins, received the sun;
Were it by chance, or forceful destiny,
Which forms in causes first whate'er shall be,
Assisted by a friend, one moonless night,
This Palamon from prison took his flight:
A pleasant beverage he prepared before,
Of wine and honey mix'd, with added store
Of opium; to his keeper this he brought,
Who swallow'd, unaware, the sleepy draught,
And snored secure till morn; his senses bound
In slumber, and in long oblivion drown'd.
Short was the night, and careful Palamon
Sought the next covert ere the rising sun.

A thick-spread forest near the city lay;
To this, with lengthen'd strides, he took his way
(For far he could not fly, and fear'd the day).
Safe from pursuit, he meant to shun the light,
Till the brown shadows of the friendly night
To Thebes might favour his intended flight.
When to his country come, his next design
Was all the Theban race in arms to join,
And war on Theseus, till he lost his life,
Or won the beauteous Emily to wife.
Thus, while his thoughts the lingering day beguile,
To gentle Arcite let us turn our style;
Who little dreamt how nigh he was to care,
Till treacherous fortune caught him in the snare.
The morning lark, the messenger of day,
Saluted in her song the morning gray;
And soon the sun arose, with beams so bright,
That all the horizon laugh'd to see the joyous sight:
He, with his tepid rays, the rose renews,
And licks the drooping leaves, and dries the dews;
When Arcite left his bed, resolved to pay
Observance to the month of merry May;
Forth on his fiery steed betimes he rode,
That scarcely prints the turf on which he trod:
At ease he seem'd, and prancing o'er the plains,
Turn'd only to the grove his horse's reins,
The grove I named before; and, lighted there,
A woodbine-garland sought to crown his hair;
Then turn'd his face against the rising day,
And raised his voice to welcome in the May:—
'For thee, sweet month, the groves green liveries
If not the first, the fairest of the year: [wear;
For thee the Graces lead the dancing Hours,
And Nature's ready pencil paints the flowers:

When thy short reign is past, the feverish sun
The sultry tropic fears, and moves more slowly on.
So may thy tender blossoms fear no blight,
Nor goats, with venom'd teeth, thy tendrils bite,
As thou shalt guide my wandering feet to find
The fragrant greens I seek my brows to bind.'
His vows address'd, within the grove he stray'd,
Till fate, or fortune, near the place convey'd
His steps where secret Palamon was laid.
Full little thought of him the gentle knight,
Who, flying death, had there conceal'd his flight,
In brakes and brambles hid, and shunning mortal sight;
And less he knew him for his hated foe,
But fear'd him as a man he did not know.
But as it has been said of ancient years,
That fields are full of eyes, and woods have ears;
For this the wise are ever on their guard,
For, unforeseen (they say) is unprepared.
Uncautious Arcite thought himself alone,
And, less than all, suspected Palamon;
Who, listening, heard him, while he search'd the grove,
And loudly sung his roundelay of love.
But on the sudden stopp'd, and silent stood
(As lovers often muse and change their mood;
Now high as heaven, and then as low as hell;
Now up, now down, as buckets in a well:
For Venus, like her day, will change her cheer,
And seldom shall we see a Friday clear).
Thus Arcite having sung, with alter'd hue
Sank on the ground, and from his bosom drew
A desperate sigh, accusing Heaven and fate,
And angry Juno's unrelenting hate:—

'Cursed be the day when first I did appear;
Let it be blotted from the calendar,
Lest it pollute the month, and poison all the year.
Still will the jealous queen pursue our race?
Cadmus is dead, the Theban city was:
Yet ceases not her hate: for all who come
From Cadmus, are involved in Cadmus' doom.
I suffer for my blood: unjust decree!
That punishes another's crime on me.
In mean estate I serve my mortal foe,
The man who caused my country's overthrow.
This is not all; for Juno, to my shame,
Has forced me to forsake my former name!
Arcite I was, Philostratus I am.
That side of heaven is all my enemy:
Mars ruin'd Thebes; his mother ruin'd me.
Of all the royal race remains but one
Beside myself, the unhappy Palamon,
Whom Theseus holds in bonds, and will not free;
Without a crime, except his kin to me.
Yet these, and all the rest, I could endure;
But love 's a malady without a cure:
Fierce love has pierced me with his fiery dart,
He fires within, and hisses at my heart.
Your eyes, fair Emily, my fate pursue:
I suffer for the rest, I die for you.
Of such a goddess no time leaves record,
Who burn'd the temple where she was adored:
And let it burn, I never will complain,
Pleased with my sufferings, if you knew my pain.'
At this a sickly qualm his heart assail'd,
His ears ring inward, and his senses fail'd.
No word miss'd Palamon of all he spoke,
But soon to deadly pale he changed his look:

He trembled every limb, and felt a smart,
As if cold steel had glided through his heart;
Nor longer staid, but starting from his place,
Discover'd stood, and show'd his hostile face:
'False traitor, Arcite! traitor to thy blood,
Bound by thy sacred oath to seek my good,
Now art thou found forsworn, for Emily;
And darest attempt her love, for whom I die.
So hast thou cheated Theseus with a wile,
Against thy vow, returning to beguile
Under a borrow'd name: as false to me,
So false thou art to him who set thee free:
But rest assured, that either thou shalt die,
Or else renounce thy claim in Emily:
For though unarm'd I am, and (freed by chance)
Am here without my sword, or pointed lance:
Hope not, base man, unquestion'd hence to go,
For I am Palamon, thy mortal foe.'
Arcite, who heard this tale, and knew the man,
His sword unsheathed, and fiercely thus began:
'Now, by the gods, who govern heaven above!
Wert thou not weak with hunger, mad with love,
That word had been thy last; or in this grove
This hand should force thee to renounce thy love.
The surety which I gave thee, I defy;
Fool, not to know that love endures no tie;
And Jove but laughs at lovers' perjury.
Know, I will serve the fair in thy despite;
But since thou art my kinsman, and a knight,
Here, have my faith; to-morrow, in this grove,
Our arms shall plead the titles of our love:
And Heaven so help my right, as I alone
Will come, and keep the cause and quarrel both
unknown;

With arms of proof both for myself and thee;
Choose thou the best, and leave the worst to me.
And, that at better ease thou mayst abide,
Bedding and clothes I will this night provide,
And needful sustenance, that thou mayst be
A conquest better won, and worthy me.'
His promise Palamon accepts; but pray'd,
To keep it better than the first he made.
Thus fair they parted till the morrow's dawn;
For each had laid his plighted faith to pawn.
O love! thou sternly dost thy power maintain,
And wilt not bear a rival in thy reign;
Tyrants and thou all fellowship disdain.
This was in Arcite proved and Palamon,
Both in despair, yet each would love alone.
Arcite return'd, and as in honour tied,
His foe with bedding and with food supplied;
Then, ere the day, two suits of armour sought,
Which, borne before him, on his steed he brought:
Both were of shining steel, and wrought so pure,
As might the strokes of two such arms endure.
Now, at the time, and in the appointed place,
The challenger and challenged, face to face
Approach; each other from afar they knew,
And from afar their hatred changed their hue.
So stands the Thracian herdsman with his spear,
Full in the gap, and hopes the hunted bear,
And hears him rustling in the wood, and sees
His course at distance by the bending trees;
And thinks, here comes my mortal enemy,
And either he must fall in fight, or I:
This, while he thinks, he lifts aloft his dart;
A generous chillness seizes every part;
The veins pour back the blood, and fortify the heart.

Thus pale they meet; their eyes with fury burn;
None greets; for none the greeting will return:
But in dumb surliness, each arm'd with care
His foe profess'd, as brother of the war:
Then both, no moment lost, at once advance
Against each other, arm'd with sword and lance:
They lash, they foin, they pass, they strive to bore
Their corslets, and the thinnest parts explore.
Thus, two long hours, in equal arms they stood,
And wounded, wound; till both were bathed in blood;
And not a foot of ground had either got,
As if the world depended on the spot.
Fell Arcite like an angry tiger fared,
And like a lion Palamon appear'd:
Or as two boars whom love to battle draws,
With rising bristles, and with frothy jaws,
Their adverse breasts with tusks oblique they wound,
With grunts and groans the forest rings around:
So fought the knights, and fighting must abide,
Till fate an umpire sends their difference to decide.
The power that ministers to God's decrees,
And executes on earth what Heaven foresees,
Call'd providence, or chance, or fatal sway,
Comes with resistless force, and finds or makes her way.
Nor kings nor nations, nor united power,
One moment can retard the appointed hour:
And some one day, some wondrous chance appears,
Which happen'd not in centuries of years:
For sure, whate'er we mortals hate or love,
Or hope or fear, depends on powers above;
They move our appetites to good or ill,
And by foresight, necessitate the will.

In Theseus this appears; whose youthful joy
Was beasts of chase in forests to destroy:
This gentle knight, inspired by jolly May,
Forsook his easy couch at early day,
And to the woods and wilds pursued his way.
Beside him rode Hippolita, the queen,
And Emily, attired in lively green;
With horns, and hounds, and all the tuneful cry,
To hunt a royal hart within the covert nigh:
And as he follow'd Mars before, so now
He serves the goddess of the silver bow.
The way that Theseus took was to the wood
Where the two knights in cruel battle stood:
The land on which they fought, the appointed place
In which the uncoupled hounds began the chase.
Thither forth-right he rode to rouse the prey,
That shaded by the fern in harbour lay;
And thence dislodged, was wont to leave the wood,
For open fields, and cross the crystal flood.
Approach'd, and looking underneath the sun,
He saw proud Arcite and fierce Palamon
In mortal battle, doubling blow on blow;
Like lightning flamed their falchions to and fro,
And shot a dreadful gleam; so strong they struck,
There seem'd less force required to fell an oak.
He gazed with wonder on their equal might,
Look'd eager on, but knew not either knight:
Resolved to learn, he spur'd his fiery steed
With goring rowels, to provoke his speed.
The minute ended that began the race,
So soon he was betwixt them on the place;
And with his sword unsheathed, on pain of life
Commands both combatants to cease their strife;
Then, with imperious tone, pursues his threat:
'What are you? Why in arms together met?

How dares your pride presume against my laws,
As in a listed field to fight your cause,
Unask'd the royal grant; no marshal by,
As knightly rites require; no judge to try?'
Then Palamon, with scarce recover'd breath,
Thus hasty spoke: 'We both deserve the death,
And both would die; for look the world around,
A pair so wretched is not to be found.
Our life's a load; encumber'd with the charge,
We long to set the imprison'd soul at large.
Now as thou art a sovereign judge, decree
The rightful doom of death to him and me;
Let neither find thy grace; for grace is cruelty.
Me first! O kill me first! and cure my woe;
Then sheathe the sword of justice on my foe:
Or kill him first; for when his name is heard,
He, foremost, will receive his due reward.
Arcite of Thebes is he! thy mortal foe,
On whom thy grace did liberty bestow;
But first contracted, that if ever found
By day or night upon the Athenian ground,
His head should pay the forfeit: see return'd
The perjured knight, his oath and honour scorn'd!
For this is he, who, with a borrow'd name,
And proffer'd service, to thy palace came,
Now call'd Philostratus: retain'd by thee,
A traitor trusted, and in high degree,
Aspiring to the bed of beauteous Emily.
My part remains:—From Thebes my birth I own,
And call myself the unhappy Palamon.
Think me not like that man, since no disgrace
Can force me to renounce the honour of my race:
Know me for what I am; I broke thy chain,
Nor promised I thy prisoner to remain:

The love of liberty with life is given,
And life itself the inferior gift of Heaven.
Thus, without crime, I fled; but further know,
I, with this Arcite, am thy mortal foe:
Then give me death, since I thy life pursue,
For safeguard of thyself, death is my due.
More wouldst thou know? I love bright Emily,
And for her sake and in her sight will die:
But kill my rival too; for he no less
Deserves; and I thy righteous doom will bless!
Assured, that what I lose, he never shall possess.'
To this replied the stern Athenian prince,
And sourly smiled, 'In owning your offence
You judge yourself; and I but keep record
In place of law, while you pronounce the word.
Take your desert, the death you have decreed;
I seal your doom, and ratify the deed.
By Mars, the patron of my arms, you die!'
He said: dumb sorrow seized the standers by.
The queen above the rest, by nature good,
(The pattern form'd of perfect womanhood)
For tender pity wept: when she began,
Through the bright quire the infectious virtue ran.
All dropp'd their tears, ev'n the contended maid;
And thus, among themselves, they softly said:
'What eyes can suffer this unworthy sight?
Two youths of royal blood, renown'd in fight,
The mastership of Heaven in face and mind,
And lovers, far beyond their faithless kind:
See their wide streaming wounds; they neither came
For pride of empire, nor desire of fame:
Kings fight for kingdoms, madmen for applause;
But love for love alone; that crowns the lover's cause!'

This thought, which ever bribes the beauteous kind,
Such pity wrought in every lady's mind,
They left their steeds, and prostrate on the place,
From the fierce king implored the offenders' grace.
He paused awhile, stood silent in his mood,
(For yet his rage was boiling in his blood)
But soon his tender mind the impression felt,
(As softest metals are not slow to melt,
And pity soonest runs in softest minds):
Then reasons with himself; and first he finds
His passion cast a mist before his sense,
And either made, or magnified the offence.
Offence! of what? to whom? Who judged the cause?
The prisoner freed himself by nature's laws:
Born free, he sought his right: the man he freed
Was perjured, but his love excused the deed.
Thus pondering, he look'd under with his eyes,
And saw the womens' tears, and heard their cries;
Which moved compassion more: he shook his head,
And softly sighing to himself, he said:—
'Curse on the unpardoning prince, whom tears can draw
To no remorse; who rules by lions' law;
And deaf to prayers, by no submission bow'd,
Rends all alike, the penitent and proud:'
At this, with look serene, he raised his head,
Reason resumed her place, and passion fled;
Then thus aloud he spoke: 'The power of love,
In earth, and seas, and air, and heaven above,
Rules, unresisted, with an awful nod;
By daily miracles declared a god:
He blinds the wise, gives eyesight to the blind;
And moulds and stamps anew the lover's mind.

Behold that Arcite, and this Palamon,
Freed from my fetters, and in safety gone;
What hinder'd either, in their native soil,
At ease to reap the harvest of their toil?
But love, their lord, did otherwise ordain,
And brought them in their own despite again,
To suffer death deserved; for well they know,
'Tis in my power, and I their deadly foe:
The proverb holds, that to be wise and love,
Is hardly granted to the gods above.
See how the madmen bleed: behold the gains
With which their master, Love, rewards their pains.
For seven long years, on duty every day,
Lo! their obedience, and their monarch's pay:
Yet, as in duty bound, they serve him on;
And ask the fools, they think it wisely done:
Nor ease, nor wealth, nor life itself regard,
For 'tis their maxim, love is love's reward!
This is not all; the fair for whom they strove
Nor knew before, nor could suspect their love,
Nor thought, when she beheld the fight from far,
Her beauty was the occasion of the war.
But sure a general doom on man is pass'd,
And all are fools and lovers, first or last:
This both by others and myself I know,
For I have served their sovereign, long ago:
Oft have been caught within the winding train
Of female snares, and felt the lover's pain,
And learn'd how far the god can human hearts
constrain.
To this remembrance, and the prayers of those
Who for the offending warriors interpose,
I give their forfeit lives; on this accord,
To do me homage as their sovereign lord;

And as my vassals, to their utmost might
Assist my person, and assert my right.'
This, freely sworn, the knights their grace obtain'd;
Then thus the king his secret thoughts explain'd:
'If wealth, or honour, or a royal race,
Or each, or all, may win a lady's grace,
Then either of you knights may well deserve
A princess born; and such is she you serve:
For Emily is sister to the crown,
And but too well to both her beauty known;
But should you combat till you both were dead,
Two lovers cannot share a single bed:
As therefore both are equal in degree,
The lot of both be left to destiny.
Now hear the award, and happy may it prove
To her, and him who best deserves her love.
Depart from hence in peace, and free as air,
Search the wide world, and where you please repair;
But on the day when this returning sun
To the same point through every sign has run,
Then each of you his hundred knights shall bring,
In royal lists, to fight before the king;
And then, the knight whom fate or happy chance
Shall with his friends to victory advance,
And grace his arms so far in equal fight,
From out the bars to force his opposite,
Or kill, or make him recreant on the plain,
The prize of valour and of love shall gain;
The vanquish'd party shall their claim release,
And the long jars conclude in lasting peace.
The charge be mine to adorn the chosen ground,
The theatre of war, for champions so renown'd;
And take the patron's place of either knight,
With eyes impartial to behold the fight;
And Heaven of me so judge, as I shall judge aright.

If both are satisfied with this accord,
Swear by the laws of knighthood on my sword.'
Who now but Palamon exults with joy?
And ravish'd Arcite seems to touch the sky.
The whole assembled troop was pleased as well,
Extoll'd the award, and on their knees they fell
To bless the gracious king. The knights with leave
Departing from the place, his last commands re-
On Emily with equal ardour look, [ceive;
And from her eyes their inspiration took:
From thence to Thebes' old walls pursue their way,
Each to provide his champions for the day.
It might be deem'd on our historian's part,
Or too much negligence, or want of art;
If he forgot the vast magnificence
Of royal Theseus, and his large expense.
He first enclosed for lists a level ground,
The whole circumference a mile around:
The form was circular; and all without
A trench was sunk, to moat the place about.
Within, an amphitheatre appear'd,
Raised in degrees; to sixty paces rear'd:
That when a man was placed in one degree,
Height was allow'd for him above to see.
Eastward was built a gate of marble white;
The like adorn'd the western opposite.
A nobler object than his fabric was,
Rome never saw; nor of so vast a space.
For, rich with spoils of many a conquer'd land,
All arts and artists Theseus could command;
Who sold for hire, or wrought for better fame,
The master-painters, and the carvers came.
So rose within the compass of the year
An age's work, a glorious theatre.

Then o'er its eastern gate was raised above
A temple, sacred to the queen of love;
An altar stood below: on either hand [wand.
A priest, with roses crown'd, who held a myrtle
The dome of Mars was on the gate opposed;
And on the north a turret was enclosed,
Within the wall, of alabaster white
And crimson coral, for the queen of night;
Who takes in silvan sports her chaste delight.
Within these oratories might you see
Rich carvings, portraitures, and imagery:
Where every figure to the life express'd
The godhead's power to whom it was address'd.
In Venus' temple, on the sides were seen
The broken slumbers of enamour'd men:
Prayers that ev'n spoke, and pity seem'd to call,
And issuing sighs that smoked along the wall,
Complaints, and hot desires, the lover's hell, [fell:
And scalding tears, that wore a channel where they
And all around were nuptial bonds, the ties
Of love's assurance, and a train of lies,
That, made in lust, conclude in perjuries.
Beauty, and youth, and wealth, and luxury,
And sprightly hope, and short-enduring joy;
And sorceries to raise the infernal powers,
And sigils framed in planetary hours;
Expense, and after-thought, and idle care,
And doubts of motley hue, and dark despair;
Suspicions, and fantastical surmise,
And Jealousy suffused, with jaundice in her eyes,
Discolouring all she view'd, in tawny dress'd,
Down-look'd, and with a cuckow on her fist.
Opposed to her, on t'other side, advance
The costly feast, the carol, and the dance,

Minstrels and music, poetry and play,
And balls by night, and tournaments by day.
All these were painted on the wall, and more;
With acts and monuments of times before:
And others added by prophetic doom,
And lovers yet unborn, and loves to come:
For there, the Idalian mount, and Citheron,
The court of Venus, was in colours drawn:
Before the palace-gate, in careless dress,
And loose array, sat portress Idleness:
There, by the fount, Narcissus pined alone;
There Samson was, with wiser Solomon,
And all the mighty names by love undone:
Medea's charms were there, Circean feasts,
With bowls that turn'd enamour'd youths to beasts.
Here might be seen, that beauty, wealth, and wit,
And prowess, to the power of love submit:
The spreading snare for all mankind is laid;
And lovers all betray, and are betray'd.
The goddess self, some noble hand had wrought;
Smiling she seem'd, and full of pleasing thought:
From ocean as she first began to rise,
And smooth'd the ruffled seas, and clear'd the skies;
She trod the brine, all bare below the breast;
And the green waves but ill conceal'd the rest:
A lute she held; and on her head was seen
A wreath of roses red, and myrtles green;
Her turtles faun'd the buxom air above;
And, by his mother, stood an infant Love
With wings unfledged; his eyes were banded o'er;
His hands a bow, his back a quiver bore, [store.
Supplied with arrows bright and keen, a deadly
But in the dome of mighty Mars the red,
With different figures all the sides were spread:

This temple, less in form, with equal grace
Was imitative of the first in Thrace:
For that cold region was the loved abode,
And sovereign mansion of the warrior-god.
The landscape was a forest wide and bare,
Where neither beast nor human kind repair:
The fowl, that scent afar, the borders fly,
And shun the bitter blast, and wheel about the sky.
A cake of scurf lies baking on the ground,
And prickly stubs, instead of trees, are found;
Or woods, with knots and knares deform'd and old;
Headless the most, and hideous to behold:
A rattling tempest through the branches went,
That stripp'd them bare, and one sole way they bent.
Heaven froze above, severe; the clouds congeal,
And through the crystal vault appear'd the standing hail.
Such was the face without; a mountain stood
Threatening from high, and overlook'd the wood.
Beneath the louring brow, and on a bent,
The temple stood of Mars armipotent:
The frame of burnish'd steel, that cast a glare
From far, and seem'd to thaw the freezing air.
A straight long entry to the temple led,
Blind with high walls, and horror over head:
Thence issued such a blast, and hollow roar,
As threaten'd from the hinge to heave the door;
In, through that door, a northern light there shone;
'Twas all it had, for windows there were none.
The gate was adamant; eternal frame!
Which hew'd by Mars himself, from Indian quarries came,
The labour of a god; and all along
Tough iron gates were clench'd to make it strong.

A tun about was every pillar there;
A polish'd mirror shone not half so clear.
There saw I how the secret felon wrought,
And treason labouring in the traitor's thought;
And midwife Time the ripen'd plot to murder brought,
There, the red anger dared the pallid fear;
Next stood Hypocrisy, with holy leer;
Soft smiling, and demurely looking down,
But hid the dagger underneath the gown:
The assassinating wife, the household fiend;
And far the blackest there, the traitor-friend.
On t'other side there stood destruction bare:
Unpunish'd rapine, and a waste of war.
Contest, with sharpen'd knives, in cloisters drawn,
And all with blood bespread the holy lawn.
Loud menaces were heard, and foul disgrace,
And bawling infamy, in language base;
Till sense was lost in sound, and silence fled the place.
The slayer of himself yet saw I there,
The gore congeal'd was clotted in his hair;
With eyes half closed, and gaping mouth he lay,
And grim, as when he breathed his sullen soul away.
In midst of all the dome, misfortune sate,
And gloomy discontent, and fell debate;
And madness laughing in his ireful mood;
And arm'd complaint on theft; and cries of blood.
There was the murder'd corpse, in covert laid,
And violent death in thousand shapes display'd:
The city to the soldier's rage resign'd:
Successful wars, and poverty behind:
Ships burnt in fight, or forced on rocky shores,
And the rash hunter strangled by the boars:

The new-born babe by nurses overlaid;
And the cook caught within the raging fire he made.
All ills of Mars's nature, flame and steel;
The gasping charioteer beneath the wheel
Of his own car; the ruin'd house, that falls
And intercepts her lord betwixt the walls:
The whole division that to Mars pertains,
All trades of death that deal in steel for gains,
Were there; the butcher, armourer, and smith
Who forges sharpen'd falchions, or the scythe.
The scarlet cónquest on a tower was placed,
With shouts, and soldiers' acclamations graced:
A pointed sword hung threatening o'er his head,
Sustain'd but by a slender twine of thread.
There saw I Mars's Ides, the capitol,
The seer in vain foretelling Cæsar's fall,
The last triumvirs, and the wars they move,
And Antony, who lost the world for love!
These, and a thousand more, the fane adorn;
Their fates were painted ere the men were born;
All copied from the heavens, and ruling force
Of the red star, in his revolving course.
The form of Mars high on a chariot stood,
All sheathed in arms, and gruffly look'd the god:
Two geomantic figures were display'd
Above his head, a warrior and a maid,[1]
One when direct, and one when retrograde.
Tired with deformities of death, I haste
To the third temple of Diana chaste:—
A silvan scene with various greens was drawn,
Shades on the sides, and on the midst a lawn:

[1] Rubeus and Puella.

The silver Cynthia, with her nymphs around,
Pursued the flying deer, the woods with horns resound:
Calisto there stood manifest of shame,
And, turn'd a bear, the northern star became:
Her son was next, and by peculiar grace
In the cold circle held the second place:
The stag Acteon in the stream had spied
The naked huntress, and for seeing, died:
His hounds, unknowing of his change, pursue
The chase, and their mistaken master slew.
Penelan Daphne too was there to see,
Apollo's love before, and now his tree:
The adjoining fane the assembled Greeks express'd,
And hunting of the Calydonian beast;
Œnides' valour, and his envied prize;
The fatal power of Atalanta's eyes;
Diana's vengeance on the victor shown,
The murderess mother, and consuming son;
The Volscian queen extended on the plain;
The treason punish'd, and the traitor slain.
The rest were various huntings, well design'd,
And savage beasts destroy'd, of every kind.
The graceful goddess was array'd in green;
About her feet were little beagles seen,
That watch'd with upward eyes the motions of their queen.
Her legs were buskin'd, and the left before,
In act to shoot; a silver bow she bore,
And at her back a painted quiver wore.
She trod a waxing moon, that soon would wane,
And, drinking borrow'd light, be fill'd again:
With downcast eyes, as seeming to survey
The dark dominions, her alternate sway.

Before her stood a woman in her throes,
And call'd Lucina's aid, her burden to disclose.
All these the painter drew with such command,
That Nature snatch'd the pencil from his hand;
Ashamed and angry, that his art could feign
And mend the tortures of a mother's pain.
Theseus beheld the fanes of every god,
And thought his mighty cost was well bestow'd.
So princes now their poets should regard;
But few can write, and fewer can reward.
The theatre thus raised, the lists enclosed,
And all with vast magnificence disposed,
We leave the monarch pleased; and haste to bring
The knights to combat; and their arms to sing.

PALAMON AND ARCITE;

OR,

THE KNIGHT'S TALE.

BOOK III.

THE day approach'd when fortune should decide
The important enterprise, and give the bride;
For now the rivals round the world had sought,
And each his number, well appointed, brought.
The nations far and near contend in choice,
And send the flower of war by public voice;
That after, or before, were never known
Such chiefs; as each an army seem'd alone.
Beside the champions, all of high degree,
Who knighthood loved, and deeds of chivalry,
Throng'd to the lists, and envied to behold
The names of others, not their own enroll'd.
Nor seems it strange; for every noble knight,
Who loves the fair, and is endued with might,
In such a quarrel would be proud to fight.
There breathes not scarce a man on British ground
(An isle for love and arms of old renown'd)
But would have sold his life to purchase fame,
To Palamon or Arcite sent his name:
And had the land selected of the best, [the rest.
Half had come hence, and let the world provide
A hundred knights with Palamon there came,
Approved in fight, and men of mighty name;

Their arms were several, as their nations were,
But furnish'd all alike with sword and spear.
Some wore coat-armour, imitating scale;
And next their skins were stubborn shirts of mail.
Some wore a breast-plate and a light juppon,[1]
Their horses clothed with rich caparison:
Some for defence would leathern bucklers use,
Of folded hides; and others, shields of Pruce.[2]
One hung a poleaxe at his saddle-bow,
And one a heavy mace, to stun the foe:
One for his legs and knees provided well,
With Jambeaux arm'd, and double plates of steel:
This on his helmet wore a lady's glove,
And that, a sleeve embroider'd by his love.
With Palamon, above the rest in place,
Lycurgus came, the surly king of Thrace;
Black was his beard, and manly was his face:
The balls of his broad eyes roll'd in his head,
And glared betwixt a yellow and a red:
He look'd a lion with a gloomy stare,
And o'er his eyebrows hung his matted hair:
Big-boned, and large of limbs, with sinews strong,
Broad-shoulder'd, and his arms were round and long.
Four milk-white bulls (the Thracian use of old)
Were yoked to draw his car of burnish'd gold.
Upright he stood, and bore aloft his shield,
Conspicuous from afar, and overlook'd the field.
His surcoat was a bear-skin on his back;
His hair hung long behind, and glossy raven-black.
His ample forehead bore a coronet,
With sparkling diamonds and with rubies set:

[1] A close coat. [2] Prussian leather.

Ten brace, and more, of greyhounds, snowy fair,
And tall as stags, ran loose, and coursed around his chair; [bear:
A match for pards in flight, in grappling for the
With golden muzzles all their mouths were bound,
And collars of the same their necks surround.
Thus through the fields Lycurgus took his way:
His hundred knights attend in pomp and proud array.
To match this monarch, with strong Arcite came
Emetrius king of Ind, (a mighty name!)
On a bay courser, goodly to behold, [gold.
The trappings of his horse emboss'd with barbarous
Not Mars bestrode a steed with greater grace:
His surcoat o'er his arms was cloth of Thrace,
Adorn'd with pearls, all orient, round, and great;
His saddle was of gold, with emeralds set.
His shoulders large a mantle did attire,
With rubies thick, and sparkling as the fire:
His amber-colour'd locks in ringlets run
With graceful negligence, and shone against the sun.
His nose was aquiline, his eyes were blue,
Ruddy his lips, and fresh and fair his hue:
Some sprinkled freckles on his face were seen,
Whose dusk set off the whiteness of the skin.
His awful presence did the crowd surprise,
Nor durst the rash spectator meet his eyes;
Eyes, that confess'd him born for kingly sway,
So fierce, they flash'd intolerable day.
His age in nature's youthful prime appear'd,
And just began to bloom his yellow beard;
Whene'er he spoke, his voice was heard around,
Loud as a trumpet, with a silver sound;
A laurel wreath his temples, fresh and green,
And myrtle sprigs, the marks of love, were mix'd between;

Upon his fist he bore, for his delight,
An eagle well reclaim'd, and lily-white.
His hundred knights attend him to the war,
All arm'd for battle, save their heads were bare.
Words and devices blazed on every shield,
And pleasing was the terror of the field.
For kings, and dukes, and barons you might see,
Like sparkling stars, though different in degree,
All for the increase of arms, and love of chivalry.
Before the king tame leopards led the way,
And troops of lions innocently play:
So Bacchus through the conquer'd Indies rode,
And beasts in gambols frisk'd before their honest god!
In this array the war of either side
Through Athens pass'd with military pride.
At prime, they enter'd on the Sunday morn;
Rich tapestry spread the streets, and flowers the pots adorn.
The town was all a jubilee of feasts:
So Theseus will'd, in honour of his guests.
Himself with open arms the king embraced;
Then all the rest in their degrees were graced.
No harbinger was needful for the night,
For every house was proud to lodge a knight.
I pass the royal treat, nor must relate
The gifts bestow'd, nor how the champions sate;
Who first, who last, or how the knights address'd
Their vows, or who was fairest at the feast;
Whose voice, whose graceful dance, did most surprise;
Soft amorous sighs, and silent love of eyes.
The rivals call my Muse another way,
To sing their vigils for the ensuing day.
'Twas ebbing darkness, past the noon of night,
And Phosphor, on the confines of the light,

Promised the sun, ere day began to spring;
The tuneful lark already stretch'd her wing,
And, flickering on her nest, made short essays to sing:
When wakeful Palamon, preventing day,
Took to the royal lists his early way,
To Venus at her fane, in her own house to pray.
There falling on his knees before her shrine,
He thus implored with prayers her power divine:—
'Creator Venus! genial power of love!
The bliss of men below and gods above!
Beneath the sliding sun thou run'st thy race,
Dost fairest shine and best become thy place:
For thee the winds their eastern blasts forbear;
Thy month reveals the spring, and opens all the year.
Thee, goddess! thee the storms of winter fly;
Earth smiles with flowers renewing; laughs the sky;
And birds to lays of love their tuneful notes apply.
For thee the lion loathes the taste of blood,
And, roaring, hunts his female through the wood:
For thee the bulls rebellow through the groves,
And tempt the streams, and snuff their absent loves.
'Tis thine whate'er is pleasant, good, or fair;
All nature is thy province, life thy care:
Thou madest the world, and dost the world repair.
Thou gladder of the mount of Cytheron,
Increase of Jove, companion of the sun!
If e'er Adonis touch'd thy tender heart,
Have pity, goddess, for thou know'st the smart.
Alas! I have not words to tell my grief;
To vent my sorrow would be some relief:
Light sufferings give us leisure to complain;
We groan, but cannot speak, in greater pain.
O goddess! tell thyself what I would say;
Thou know'st it, and I feel too much to pray.

So grant my suit as I enforce my might,
In love to be thy champion and thy knight;
A servant to thy sex, a slave to thee,
A foe profess'd to barren chastity.
Nor ask I fame or honour of the field;
Nor choose I more to vanquish than to yield:
In my divine Emilia make me bless'd,
Let fate or partial chance dispose the rest:
Find thou the manner and the means prepare;
Possession, more than conquest, is my care.
Mars is the warrior's god; in him it lies,
On whom he favours to confer the prize;
With smiling aspect you serenely move
In your fifth orb, and rule the realm of love.
The Fates but only spin the coarser clue;
The finest of the wool is left for you.
Spare me but one small portion of the twine,
And let the Sisters cut below your line;
The rest among the rubbish may they sweep,
Or add it to the yarn of some old miser's heap.
But if you this ambitious prayer deny,
(A wish, I grant, beyond mortality)
Then let me sink beneath proud Arcite's arms,
And I once dead, let him possess her charms!'
Thus ended he: then, with observance due,
The sacred incense on her altar threw:
The curling smoke mounts heavy from the fires;
At length it catches flame, and in a blaze expires:
At once the gracious goddess gave the sign,
Her statue shook, and trembled all the shrine.
Pleased, Palamon the tardy omen took;
For, since the flames pursued the trailing smoke,
He knew his boon was granted: but the day
To distance driven, and joy adjourn'd with long delay.

Now morn with rosy light had streak'd the sky,
Up rose the sun, and up rose Emily;
Address'd her early steps to Cynthia's fane,
In state, attended by her maiden train,
Who bore the vests that holy rites require,
Incense, and odorous gums, and cover'd fire.
The plenteous horns with pleasant mead they crown,
Nor wanted aught besides in honour of the moon.
Now, while the temple smoked with hallow'd steam,
They wash the virgin in a living stream.
The secret ceremonies I conceal,
Uncouth, perhaps unlawful, to reveal:
But such they were as pagan use required,
Perform'd by women when the men retired;
Whose eyes profane, their chaste mysterious rites
Might turn to scandal or obscene delights.
Well-meaners think no harm; but for the rest,
Things sacred they pervert, and silence is the best.
Her shining hair, uncomb'd, was loosely spread,
A crown of mastless oak adorn'd her head,
When, to the shrine approach'd, the spotless maid
Had kindling fires on either altar laid:
(The rites were such as were observed of old,
By Statius in his Theban story told)
Then kneeling, with her hands across her breast,
Thus lowly she preferr'd her chaste request:—
'O goddess! haunter of the woodland-green,
To whom both heaven, and earth, and seas are seen;
Queen of the nether skies, where half the year
Thy silver beams descend, and light the gloomy sphere;
Goddess of maids! and conscious of our hearts,
So keep me from the vengeance of thy darts,
Which Niobe's devoted issue felt, [were dealt;
When hissing through the skies the feather'd deaths

As I desire to live a virgin life,
Nor know the name of mother or of wife.
Thy votaress from my tender years I am,
And love, like thee, the woods and silvan game.
Like death, thou know'st, I loathe the nuptial state;
And man, the tyrant of our sex, I hate;
A lowly servant, but a lofty mate.
Where love is duty on the female side, [pride.
On their's mere sensual gust, and sought with surly
Now by thy triple shape, as thou art seen
In heaven, earth, hell, and every where a queen,
Grant this, my first desire: let discord cease,
And make betwixt the rivals lasting peace;
Quench their hot fire, or far from me remove
The flame, and turn it on some other love.
Or if my frowning stars have so decreed,
That one must be rejected, one succeed,
Make him my lord, within whose faithful breast
Is fix'd my image, and who loves me best.
But, O! ev'n that avert! I choose it not;
But take it as the least unhappy lot.
A maid I am, and of thy virgin train;
O, let me still that spotless name retain!
Frequent the forests, thy chaste will obey,
And only make the beasts of chase my prey!'
The flames ascend on either altar clear,
While thus the blameless maid address'd her prayer.
When lo! the burning fire, that shone so bright,
Flew off, all sudden, with extinguish'd light,
And left one altar dark, a little space,
Which turn'd, self-kindled, and renew'd the blaze:
The other victor-flame a moment stood,
Then fell, and lifeless left the extinguish'd wood;
For ever lost, the irrevocable light
Forsook the blackening coals and sunk to night:

At either end it whistled as it flew,
And as the brands were green, so dropp'd the dew,
Infected, as it fell, with sweat of sanguine hue.
The maid from that ill omen turn'd her eyes,
And with loud shrieks and clamours rent the skies;
Nor knew what signified the boding sign,
But found the powers displeased, and fear'd the wrath divine.
Then shook the sacred shrine, and sudden light
Sprung through the vaulted roof, and made the temple bright.
The power, behold! the power in glory shone,
By her bent bow and her keen arrows known:
The rest, a huntress issuing from the wood,
Reclining on her cornel spear she stood;
Then gracious thus began:—'Dismiss thy fear,
And Heaven's unchanged decrees attentive hear:
More powerful gods have torn thee from my side,
Unwilling to resign, and doom'd a bride:
The two contending knights are weigh'd above;
One Mars protects, and one the queen of Love;
But which the man, is in the Thunderer's breast,
This he pronounced—'tis he who loves thee best.
The fire that once extinct revived again,
Foreshows the love allotted to remain:
Farewell!' she said; and vanish'd from the place:
The sheaf of arrows shook, and rattled in the case.
Aghast at this, the royal virgin stood
Disclaim'd, and now no more a sister of the wood;
But to the parting goddess thus she pray'd:
'Propitious still be present to my aid,
Nor quite abandon your once-favour'd maid!'
Then, sighing, she return'd; but smiled betwixt,
With hopes and fears, and joys with sorrows mix'd.

[illegible]
[illegible] of Mars, who shares the sceptre of power,
[illegible] deigns to come to the empire here.
[illegible] above with jarring cries the power acclaiming:
Thou juvenate now before his altar lay,
And chief his manly arms, and thus began to pray:
"Strong God of Arms! whose iron sceptre sways
The freezing north and Hyperborean seas,
And Scythian caves, and Thracia's winter coast,
Where stand thy steeds, and there art honour'd most:
There most; but every where thy power is known,
The fortune of the fight is all thy own:
Terror is thine, and wild amazement flung
From out thy chariot, withers ev'n the strong;
And disarray and shameful rout ensue,
And force is added to the fainting crew.
Acknowledged as thou art, accept my prayer:
If aught I have achieved deserve thy care;
If to my utmost power, with sword and shield,
I dared the death, unknowing how to yield;
And, falling in my rank, still kept the field:
Then let my arms prevail, by thee sustain'd,
That Emily by conquest may be gain'd.
Have pity on my pains; nor those unknown
To Mars, which, when a lover, were his own.
Venus, the public care of all above,
Thy stubborn heart has soften'd into love:
Now, by her blandishments and powerful charms,
When, yielded, she lay curling in thy arms;
Ev'n by thy shame, if shame it may be call'd,
When Vulcan had thee in his net enthrall'd;
O envied ignominy! sweet disgrace!
When every god that saw thee, wish'd thy place!

By those dear pleasures, aid my arms in fight,
And make me conquer in my patron's right:
For I am young, a novice in the trade,
The fool of love, unpractised to persuade;
And want the soothing arts that catch the fair,
But, caught myself, lie struggling in the snare:
And she I love or laughs at all my pain,
Or knows her worth too well, and pays me with [disdain.
For sure I am, unless I win in arms,
To stand excluded from Emilia's charms:
Nor can my strength avail, unless by thee
Endued with force, I gain the victory:
Then for the fire which warm'd thy generous heart,
Pity thy subject's pains and equal smart:
So be the morrow's sweat and labour mine;
The palm and honour of the conquest thine.
Then shall the war, and stern debate, and strife
Immortal, be the business of my life;
And in thy fane, the dusty spoils among,
High on the burnish'd roof my banner shall be hung,
Rank'd with my champion's bucklers; and below,
With arms reversed, the achievements of my foe:
And while these limbs the vital spirit feeds,
While day to night, and night to day succeeds,
Thy smoking altars shall be fat with food
Of incense, and the grateful steam of blood;
Burnt-offerings morn and evening shall be thine,
And fires eternal in thy temple shine.
The bush of yellow beard, this length of hair,
Which from my birth inviolate I bear,
Guiltless of steel, and from the razor free,
Shall fall, a plenteous crop, reserved for thee.
So may my arms with victory be blest,
I ask no more, let fate dispose the rest!'

The champion ceased: there follow'd in the close
A hollow groan; a murmuring wind arose;
The rings of iron, that on the doors were hung,
Sent out a jarring sound, and harshly rung:
The bolted gates flew open at the blast;
The storm rush'd in; and Arcite stood aghast!
The flames were blown aside, yet shone they bright,
Fann'd by the wind, and gave a ruffled light.
Then from the ground a scent began to rise,
Sweet smelling, as accepted sacrifice:
This omen pleased; and, as the flames aspire,
With odorous incense Arcite heaps the fire:
Nor wanted hymns to Mars, or heathen charms;
At length the nodding statue clash'd his arms,
And with a sullen sound and feeble cry,
Half sunk and half pronounced the word of victory!
For this, with soul devout, he thank'd the god;
And, of success secure, return'd to his abode.
These vows, thus granted, raised a strife above
Betwixt the god of War and queen of Love.
She granting first, had right of time to plead;
But he had granted too, nor would recede.
Jove was for Venus, but he fear'd his wife,
And seem'd unwilling to decide the strife;
Till Saturn from his leaden throne arose,
And found a way the difference to compose:
Though sparing of his grace, to mischief bent,
He seldom does a good with good intent.
Wayward, but wise; by long experience taught;
To please both parties, for ill ends, he sought:
For this advantage age from youth has won,
As, not to be outridden, though outrun.

By fortune he was now to Venus trined,[1]
And with stern Mars in Capricorn was join'd:
Of him disposing in his own abode,
He soothed the goddess, while he gull'd the god:—
'Cease, daughter, to complain, and stint the strife,
Thy Palamon shall have his promised wife;
And Mars, the lord of conquest, in the fight,
With palm and laurel shall adorn his knight.
Wide is my course, nor turn I to my place
Till length of time, and move with tardy pace.
Man feels me when I press the ethereal plains;
My hand is heavy, and the wound remains.
Mine is the shipwreck, in a watery sign;
And in an earthy, the dark dungeon mine.
Cold shivering agues, melancholy care,
And bitter blasting winds, and poison'd air,
Are mine; and wilful death, resulting from despair.
The throttling quinsy 'tis my star appoints,
And rheumatisms I send, to rack the joints.
When churls rebel against their native prince,
I arm their hands, and furnish the pretence;
And, housing in the lion's hateful sign,
Bought senates and deserting troops are mine.
Mine is the privy poisoning; I command
Unkindly seasons and ungrateful land;
By me kings' palaces are push'd to ground,
And miners crush'd beneath their mines are found;
'Twas I slew Samson, when the pillar'd hall
Fell down, and crush'd the many with the fall:
My looking is the sire of pestilence,
That sweeps at once the people and the prince.

[1] Trine is an aspect of planets, supposed by astrologers to be eminently benign.

Now weep no more, but trust thy grandsire's art;
Mars shall be pleased, and thou perform thy part.
'Tis ill, though different your complexions are,
The family of heaven for men should war.'
The expedient pleased, where neither lost his right:
Mars had the day, and Venus had the night.
The management they left to Chronos' care:
Now turn we to the effect, and sing the war.

In Athens all was pleasure, mirth, and play,
All proper to the spring and sprightly May;
Which every soul inspired with such delight,
'Twas justing all the day, and love at night.
Heaven smiled, and gladded was the heart of man;
And Venus had the world as when it first began.
At length in sleep their bodies they compose,
And dreamt the future fight, and early rose.

Now scarce the dawning day began to spring,
As, at a signal given, the streets with clamours ring:
At once the crowd arose; confused and high,
Ev'n from the heavens was heard a shouting cry;
For Mars was early up, and roused the sky.
The gods came downward to behold the wars,
Sharpening their sights, and leaning from their stars.
The neighing of the generous horse was heard,
For battle by the busy groom prepared;
Rustling of harness, rattling of the shield,
Clattering of armour furbish'd for the field.
Crowds to the castle mounted up the street,
Battering the pavement with their coursers' feet:
The greedy sight might there devour the gold
Of glittering arms, too dazzling to behold;
And polish'd steel, that cast the view aside,
And crested morions with their plumy pride.

Knights, with a long retinue of their squires,
In gaudy liveries march, and quaint attires:
One laced the helm, another held the lance,
A third the shining buckler did advance.
The courser paw'd the ground with restless feet,
And snorting foam'd, and champ'd the golden bit.
The smiths and armourers on palfreys ride,
Files in their hands, and hammers at their side,
And nails for loosen'd spears, and thongs for shields provide.
The yeomen guard the streets in seemly bands,
And clowns come crowding on with cudgels in their hands.
The trumpets, next the gate in order placed,
Attend the sign to sound the martial blast:
The palace-yard is fill'd with floating tides,
And the last comers bear the former to the sides.
The throng is in the midst: the common crew
Shut out, the hall admits the better few.
In knots they stand, or in a rank they walk,
Serious in aspect, earnest in their talk:
Factious, and favouring this or t'other side,
As their strong fancies and weak reason guide.
Their wagers back their wishes: numbers hold
With the fair freckled king, and beard of gold;
So vigorous are his eyes, such rays they cast,
So prominent his eagle's beak is placed.
But most their looks on the black monarch bend,
His rising muscles and his brawn commend;
His double-biting axe and beamy spear,
Each asking a gigantic force to rear.
All spoke as partial favour moved the mind,
And, safe themselves, at others cost divined.

Waked by the cries, the Athenian chief arose,
The knightly forms of combat to dispose;
And, passing through the obsequious guards, he sate
Conspicuous on a throne, sublime in state.
There, for the two contending knights he sent:
Arm'd cap-a-pee, with reverence low they bent.
He smiled on both, and with superior look,
Alike their offer'd adoration took.
The people prese on every side to see
Their awful prince, and hear his high decree.
Then signing to their heralds with his hand,
They gave his orders from their lofty stand.
Silence is thrice enjoin'd; then thus aloud
The king at arms bespeaks the knights and listening crowd:

'Our sovereign lord has ponder'd in his mind
The means to spare the blood of gentle kind;
And of his grace and inborn clemency,
He modifies his first severe decree:
The keener edge of battle to rebate,
The troops for honour fighting, not for hate,
He wills, not death should terminate their strife;
And wounds, if wounds ensue, be short of life;
But issues, ere the fight, his dread command,
That slings afar, and poniards hand to hand,
Be banish'd from the field; that none shall dare
With shorten'd sword to stab in closer war;
But in fair combat fight, with manly strength;
Nor push with biting point, but strike at length.
The tourney is allow'd but one career
Of the tough ash with the sharp-grinded spear:
But knights unhorsed may rise from off the plain,
And fight on foot their honour to regain.

Nor, if at mischief taken, on the ground
Be slain, but prisoners to the pillar bound,
At either barrier placed; or, captives made,
Be freed; or, arm'd anew, the fight invade.
The chief of either side bereft of life,
Or yielded to his foe, concludes the strife.
Thus dooms the lord: now valiant knights and young,
Fight each his fill with swords and maces long.'
The herald ends: the vaulted firmament
With loud acclaims and vast applause is rent:
'Heaven guard a prince so gracious and so good,
So just, and yet so provident of blood!'
This was the general cry. The trumpet's sound
And warlike symphony is heard around.
The marching troops through Athens take their way,
The great earl-marshal orders their array.
The fair from high the passing pomp behold;
A rain of flowers is from the windows roll'd.
The casements are with golden tissue spread,
And horses' hoofs, for earth, on silken tapestry tread.
The king goes midmost, and the rivals ride
In equal rank, and close his either side.
Next after these, there rode the royal wife,
With Emily, the cause and the reward of strife.
The following cavalcade by three and three,
Proceed by titles marshall'd in degree.
Thus through the southern gate they take their way,
And at the lists arrived, ere prime of day.
There, parting from the king, the chiefs divide,
And wheeling east and west, before their meiny ride.
The Athenian monarch mounts his throne on high,
And after him the queen, and Emily:

Next these, the kindred of the crown are graced
With nearer seats, and lords by ladies placed.
Scarce were they seated, when with clamours loud
In rush'd at once a rude promiscuous crowd:
The guards and then each other overbear,
And in a moment throng the spacious theatre.
Now changed the jarring noise to whispers low,
As winds forsaking seas more softly blow,
When at the western gate, on which the car
Is placed aloft that bears the god of War,
Proud Arcite entering arm'd before his train,
Stops at the barrier and divides the plain:
Red was his banner, and display'd abroad
The bloody colours of his patron-god.
  At that self-moment enters Palamon
The gate of Venus and the rising sun;
Waved by the wanton winds, his banner flies,
All maiden white, and shares the people's eyes.
From east to west, look all the world around,
Two troops so match'd were never to be found:
Such bodies built for strength, of equal age,
In stature sized; so proud an equipage:
The nicest eye could no distinction make,
Where lay the advantage, or what side to take.
Thus ranged, the herald for the last proclaims
A silence, while they answer'd to their names:
For so the king decreed, to shun with care
The fraud of musters false, the common bane of war.
The tale was just, and then the gates were closed;
And chief to chief, and troop to troop opposed.
The heralds last retired and loudly cried,
'The fortune of the field be fairly tried!'

At this the challenger with fierce defy
His trumpet sounds; the challenged makes reply;
With clangor rings the field, resounds the vaulted sky.
Their vizors closed, their lances in the rest,
Or at the helmet pointed, or the crest;
They vanish from the barrier, speed the race,
And, spurring, see decrease the middle space.
A cloud of smoke envelopes either host,
And all at once the combatants are lost:
Darkling they join adverse, and shock unseen,
Coursers with coursers justling, men with men.
As labouring in eclipse, awhile they stay,
Till the next blast of wind restores the day.
They look anew: the beauteous form of fight
Is changed, and war appears a grisly sight.
Two troops in fair array one moment show'd,
The next, a field with fallen bodies strow'd:
Not half the number in their seats are found;
But men and steeds lie grovelling on the ground.
The points of spears are stuck within the shield,
The steeds without their riders scour the field.
The knights unhorsed on foot renew the fight;
The glittering falchions cast a gleaming light:
Hauberks and helms are hew'd with many a wound;
Out spins the streaming blood, and dyes the ground.
The mighty maces with such haste descend,
They break the bones, and make the solid armour bend.
This thrusts amid the throng with furious force;
Down goes, at once, the horseman and the horse:
That courser stumbles on the fallen steed,
And, floundering, throws the rider o'er his head.

One rolls along, a football to his foes;
One with a broken truncheon deals his blows.
This halting, this disabled with his wound,
In triumph led, is to the pillar bound,
Where, by the king's award, he must abide:
There goes a captive led on t' other side.
By fits they cease; and leaning on the lance,
Take breath awhile, and to new fight advance.
Full oft the rivals met, and neither spared
His utmost force, and each forgot to ward.
The head of this was to the saddle bent,
That other backward to the crupper sent;
Both were by turns unhorsed; the jealous blows
Fall thick and heavy, when on foot they close:
So deep their falchions bite, that every stroke
Pierced to the quick; and equal wounds they gave and took.
Borne far asunder by the tides of men,
Like adamant and steel they meet again.
So when a tiger sucks the bullock's blood,
A famish'd lion issuing from the wood
Roars lordly fierce, and challenges the food;
Each claims possession, neither will obey,
But both their paws are fasten'd on the prey:
They bite, they tear; and while in vain they strive,
The swains come arm'd between, and both to distance drive.
At length, as fate foredoom'd, and all things tend
By course of time to their appointed end;
So when the sun to west was far declined,
And both afresh in mortal battle join'd,
The strong Emetrius came in Arcite's aid,
And Palamon with odds was overlaid:

For turning short, he struck with all his might
Full on the helmet of the unwary knight.
Deep was the wound; he stagger'd with the blow,
And turn'd him to his unexpected foe; [down,
Whom with such force he struck, he fell'd him
And cleft the circle of his golden crown:
But Arcite's men, who now prevail'd in fight,
Twice ten at once surround the single knight:
O'erpower'd at length, they force him to the ground,
Unyielded as he was, and to the pillar bound;
And king Lycurgus, while he fought in vain
His friend to free, was tumbled on the plain.
Who now laments but Palamon, compell'd
No more to try the fortune of the field!
And worse than death, to view with hateful eyes
His rival's conquest, and renounce the prize!
The royal judge on his tribunal placed,
Who had beheld the fight from first to last,
Bade cease the war; pronouncing from on high,
'Arcite of Thebes had won the beauteous Emily.'
The sound of trumpets to the voice replied,
And round the royal lists the heralds cried,
'Arcite of Thebes has won the beauteous bride!'
The people rend the skies with vast applause;
All own the chief, when fortune owns the cause.
Arcite is own'd ev'n by the gods above,
And conquering Mars insults the queen of Love.
So laugh'd he when the rightful Titan fail'd,
And Jove's usurping arms in heaven prevail'd.
Laugh'd all the powers who favour tyranny,
And all the standing army of the sky.
But Venus with dejected eyes appears,
And, weeping, on the lists distill'd her tears;

Her will refused, which grieves a woman most,
And in her champion foil'd, the cause of love is lost.
Till Saturn said, 'Fair daughter, now be still;
The blustering fool has satisfied his will:
His boon is given; his knight has gain'd the day,
But lost the prize; the arrears are yet to pay.
Thy hour is come, and mine the care shall be
To please thy knight, and set thy promise free.'
Now while the heralds run the lists around,
And 'Arcite, Arcite,' heaven and earth resound;
A miracle (nor less it could be call'd)
Their joy with unexpected sorrow pall'd.
The victor-knight had laid his helm aside,
Part for his ease, the greater part for pride;
Bare-headed, popularly low he bow'd,
And paid the salutations of the crowd:
Then spurring at full speed, ran endlong on
Where Theseus sate on his imperial throne;
Furious he drove, and upward cast his eye,
Where, next the queen, was placed his Emily;
Then passing, to the saddle-bow he bent:
A sweet regard the gracious virgin lent:
(For women, to the brave an easy prey,
Still follow fortune, where she leads the way)
Just then, from earth sprung out a flashing fire,
By Pluto sent, at Saturn's bad desire;
The startling steed was seized with sudden fright,
And, bounding, o'er the pummel cast the knight:
Forward he flew, and pitching on his head,
He quiver'd with his feet, and lay for dead.
Black was his countenance in a little space,
For all the blood was gather'd in his face.
Help was at hand; they rear'd him from the ground,
And from his cumbrous arms his limbs unbound;

Then lanced a vein, and watch'd returning breath;
It came, but clogg'd with symptoms of his death.
The saddle-bow the noble parts had press'd,
All bruised and mortified his manly breast.
Him still entranced, and in a litter laid,
They bore from field, and to his bed convey'd.
At length he waked, and with a feeble cry,
The word he first pronounced was 'Emily.'
Meantime the king, though inwardly he mourn'd,
In pomp triumphant to the town return'd,
Attended by the chiefs, who fought the field.
(Now friendly mix'd, and in one troop compell'd)
Composed his looks to counterfeited cheer,
And bade them not for Arcite's life to fear.
But that which gladded all the warrior-train,
Though most were solely wounded, none were slain.
The surgeons soon despoiled them of their arms,
And some with salves they cure, and some with charms;
Foment the bruises, and the pains assuage,
And heal their inward hurts with sovereign draughts
The king in person visits all around, [of sage.
Comforts the sick, congratulates the sound;
Honours the princely chiefs, rewards the rest,
And holds for thrice three days a royal feast.
None was disgraced; for falling is no shame;
And cowardice alone is loss of fame.
The venturous knight is from the saddle thrown;
But 'tis the fault of fortune, not his own.
If crowns and palms the conquering side adorn,
The victor under better stars was born:
The brave man seeks not popular applause,
Nor overpower'd with arms deserts his cause:
Unshamed, though foil'd, he does the best he can;
Force is of brutes, but honour is of man.

Thus Theseus smiled on all with equal grace;
And each was set according to his place.
With ease were reconciled the differing parts,
For envy never dwells in noble hearts.
At length they took their leave, the time expired,
Well pleased; and to their several homes retired.
Meanwhile the health of Arcite still impairs;
From bad proceeds to worse, and mocks the leeches' cares:
Swoln in his breast, his inward pains increase;
All means are used, and all without success.
The clotted blood lies heavy on his heart,
Corrupts, and there remains in spite of art:
Nor breathing veins, nor cupping will prevail;
All outward remedies and inward fail:
The mould of nature's fabric is destroy'd,
Her vessels discomposed, her virtue void:
The bellows of his lungs begin to swell:
All out of frame is every secret cell,
Nor can the good receive, nor bad expel.
Those breathing organs, thus within oppress'd,
With venom soon distend the sinews of his breast.
Nought profits him to save abandon'd life,
Nor vomit's upward aid, nor downward laxative.
The midmost region batter'd and destroy'd,
When nature cannot work, the effect of art is void;
For physic can but mend our crazy state;
Patch an old building, not a new create.
Arcite is doom'd to die in all his pride,
Must leave his youth, and yield his beauteous bride,
Gain'd hardly, against right, and unenjoy'd.
When 'twas declared all hope of life was past,
Conscience (that of all physic works the last)
Caused him to send for Emily in haste.

With her, at his desire, came Palamon;
Then, on his pillow raised, he thus begun:
'No language can express the smallest part
Of what I feel and suffer in my heart
For you, whom best I love and value most:
But to your service I bequeath my ghost;
Which, from this mortal body, when untied,
Unseen, unheard, shall hover at your side;
Nor fright you waking, nor your sleep offend,
But wait officious, and your steps attend:
How I have loved, excuse my faltering tongue,
My spirit's feeble, and my pains are strong:
This I may say, I only grieve to die
Because I lose my charming Emily:
To die, when Heaven had put you in my power,
Fate could not choose a more malicious hour!
What greater curse could envious fortune give,
Than just to die, when I began to live?
Vain men, how vanishing a bliss we crave,
Now warm in love, now withering in the grave!
Never, O! never more to see the sun!
Still dark, in a damp vault, and still alone!
This fate is common; but I lose my breath
Near bliss, and yet not bless'd before my death.
Farewell! but take me dying in your arms,
'Tis all I can enjoy of all your charms:
This hand I cannot but in death resign;
Ah, could I live! but while I live 'tis mine.
I feel my end approach, and thus embraced,
Am pleased to die; but hear me speak my last.
Ah! my sweet foe, for you, and you alone,
I broke my faith with injured Palamon.
But love the sense of right and wrong confounds,
Strong love and proud ambition have no bounds.

And much I doubt, should Heaven my life prolong,
I should return to justify my wrong.
For while my former flames remain within,
Repentance is but want of power to sin.
With mortal hatred I pursued his life,
Nor he, nor you, were guilty of the strife;
Nor I, but as I loved: yet all combined,
Your beauty, and my impotence of mind,
And his concurrent flame that blew my fire;
For still our kindred souls had one desire.
He had a moment's right in point of time;
Had I seen first, then his had been the crime.
Fate made it mine, and justified his right;
Nor holds this earth a more deserving knight,
For virtue, valour, and for noble blood,
Truth, honour, all that is comprised in good;
So help me Heaven! in all the world is none
So worthy to be loved as Palamon.
He loves you too with such a holy fire,
As will not, cannot, but with life expire:
Our vow'd affections both have often tried,
Nor any love but yours could ours divide.
Then, by my love's inviolable band,
By my long suffering, and my short command,
If e'er you plight your vows when I am gone,
Have pity on the faithful Palamon!'
This was his last; for death came on amain,
And exercised below his iron reign;
Then upward, to the seat of life he goes;
Sense fled before him, what he touch'd he froze;
Yet could he not his closing eyes withdraw,
Though less and less of Emily he saw:
So speechless for a little space he lay,
Then grasp'd the hand he held, and sigh'd his soul away.

But whither went his soul, let such relate
Who search the secrets of the future state:
Divines can say but what themselves believe;
Strong proofs they have, but not demonstrative;
For, were all plain, then all sides must agree,
And faith itself be lost in certainty.
To live uprightly then is sure the best,
To save ourselves, and not to damn the rest.
The soul of Arcite went, where heathens go,
Who better live than we, though less they know.
In Palamon a manly grief appears;
Silent he wept, ashamed to show his tears:
Emilia shriek'd but once, and then, oppress'd
With sorrow, sunk upon her lover's breast:
Till Theseus in his arms convey'd with care,
Far from so sad a sight, the swooning fair.
'Twere loss of time her sorrow to relate;
Ill bears the sex a youthful lover's fate,
When just approaching to the nuptial state.
But like a low-hung cloud, it rains so fast,
That all at once it falls, and cannot last.
The face of things is changed, and Athens now,
That laugh'd so late, becomes the scene of woe:
Matrons and maids, both sexes, every state,
With tears lament the knight's untimely fate.
Not greater grief in falling Troy was seen
For Hector's death; but Hector was not then.
Old men with dust deform'd their hoary hair,
The women beat their breasts, their cheeks they tear.
'Why wouldst thou go, (with one consent they cry)
When thou hadst gold enough, and Emily?'
Theseus himself, who should have cheer'd the grief
Of others, wanted now the same relief.

Old Egeus only could revive his son,
Who various changes of the world had known,
And strange vicissitudes of human fate,
Still altering, never in a steady state:
Good after ill, and after pain delight;
Alternate, like the scenes of day and night.
'Since every man who lives, is born to die,
And none can boast sincere felicity;
With equal mind, what happens let us bear,
Nor joy nor grieve too much for things beyond our care.
Like pilgrims, to the appointed place we tend;
The world's an inn, and death the journey's end.
Ev'n kings but play; and when their part is done,
Some other, worse or better, mount the throne.'
With words like these the crowd was satisfied,
And so they would have been had Theseus died.
But he, their king, was labouring in his mind,
A fitting place for funeral pomps to find,
Which were in honour of the dead design'd.
And after long debate, at last he found
(As love itself had mark'd the spot of ground)
That grove for ever green, that conscious land,
Where he with Palamon fought hand to hand:
That, where he fed his amorous desires
With soft complaints, and felt his hottest fires,
There other flames might waste his earthly part,
And burn his limbs, where love had burn'd his heart.
This once resolved, the peasants were enjoin'd
Sere wood, and firs, and dodder'd oaks to find.
With sounding axes to the grove they go,
Fell, split, and lay the fuel on a row,
Vulcanian food: a bier is next prepared,
On which the lifeless body should be rear'd,

Cover'd with cloth of gold, on which was laid
The corpse of Arcite, in like robes array'd.
White gloves were on his hands, and on his head
A wreath of laurel, mix'd with myrtle, spread:
A sword keen-edged within his right he held,
The warlike emblem of the conquer'd field:
Bare was his manly visage on the bier;
Menaced his countenance, ev'n in death severe.
Then to the palace-hall they bore the knight,
To lie in solemn state, a public sight.
Groans, cries, and howlings fill the crowded place,
And unaffected sorrow sate on every face.
Sad Palamon above the rest appears,
In sable garments, dew'd with gushing tears,
His auburn locks on either shoulder flow'd,
Which to the funeral of his friend he vow'd:
But Emily, as chief, was next his side,
A virgin-widow, and a mourning bride.
And that the princely obsequies might be
Perform'd according to his high degree,
The steed that bore him living to the fight,
Was trapp'd with polish'd steel, all shining bright,
And cover'd with the achievements of the knight.
The riders rode abreast, and one his shield,
His lance of cornel-wood another held;
The third his bow; and, glorious to behold,
The costly quiver, all of burnish'd gold.
The noblest of the Grecians next appear,
And, weeping, on their shoulders bore the bier;
With sober pace they march'd, and often staid,
And through the master-street the corpse convey'd.
The houses to their tops with black were spread,
And ev'n the pavements were with mourning hid.

The right side of the pall old Egeus kept,
And on the left the royal Theseus wept:
Each bore a golden bowl of work divine, [wine.
With honey fill'd and milk, and mix'd with ruddy
Then Palamon, the kinsman of the slain,
And after him appear'd the illustrious train:
To grace the pomp, came Emily the bright,
With cover'd fire, the funeral pile to light.
With high devotion was the service made,
And all the rites of pagan honour paid:
So lofty was the pile, a Parthian bow,
With vigour drawn, must send the shaft below.
The bottom was full twenty fathom broad,
With crackling straw beneath in due proportion strow'd.
The fabric seem'd a wood of rising green,
With sulphur and bitumen cast between
To feed the flames: the trees were unctuous fir,
And mountain-ash, the mother of the spear;
The mourner yew, and builder oak were there:
The beech, the swimming alder, and the plane,
Hard box, and linden of a softer grain, [ordain.
And laurels, which the gods for conquering chiefs
How they were rank'd, shall rest untold by me,
With nameless nymphs that lived in every tree;
Nor how the dryads, and the woodland train,
Disherited, ran howling o'er the plain:
Nor how the birds to foreign seats repair'd,
Or beasts, that bolted out, and saw the forest bared:
Nor how the ground, now clear'd, with ghastly fright
Beheld the sudden sun, a stranger to the light.
The straw, as first I said, was laid below;
Of chips and sere-wood was the second row;

The third of greens, and timber newly fell'd;
The fourth high stage the fragrant odours held,
And pearls, and precious stones, and rich array;
In midst of which, embalm'd, the body lay.
The service sung, the maid with mourning eyes
The stubble fired; the smouldering flames arise:
This office done, she sunk upon the ground;
But what she spoke, recover'd from her swoon,
I want the wit in moving words to dress;
But by themselves the tender sex may guess.
While the devouring fire was burning fast,
Rich jewels in the flame the wealthy cast;
And some their shields, and some their lances threw,
And gave their warrior's ghost a warrior's due.
Full bowls of wine, of honey, milk, and blood,
Were pour'd upon the pile of burning wood,
And hissing flames receive, and hungry lick the food.
Then thrice the mounted squadrons ride around
The fire, and Arcite's name they thrice resound:
'Hail! and farewell!' they shouted thrice amain,
Thrice facing to the left, and thrice they turn'd again;
Still as they turn'd, they beat their clattering shields;
The women mix their cries; and clamour fills the fields.
The warlike wakes continued all the night,
And funeral games were play'd at new returning light.
Who naked wrestled best, besmear'd with oil,
Or who with gauntlets gave or took the foil,
I will not tell you, nor would you attend;
But briefly haste to my long story's end.

I pass the rest; the year was fully mourn'd,
And Palamon long since to Thebes return'd,
When, by the Grecians' general consent,
At Athens Theseus held his parliament:
Among the laws that pass'd, it was decreed,
That conquer'd Thebes from bondage should be freed;
Reserving homage to the Athenian throne,
To which the sovereign summon'd Palamon.
Unknowing of the cause, he took his way,
Mournful in mind, and still in black array.
The monarch mounts the throne, and placed on high,
Commands into the court the beauteous Emily:
So call'd she came; the senate rose, and paid
Becoming reverence to the royal maid.
And first soft whispers through the assembly went;
With silent wonder then they watch'd the event:
All hush'd, the king arose with awful grace,
Deep thought was in his breast, and counsel in his face.
At length he sigh'd; and having first prepared
The attentive audience, thus his will declared:
"The cause and spring of motion from above
Hung down on earth the golden chain of love:
Great was the effect, and high was his intent,
When peace among the jarring seeds he sent.
Fire, flood, and earth, and air, by this were bound,
And love, the common link, the new creation crown'd.
The chain still holds; for though the forms decay,
Eternal matter never wears away:
The same first Mover certain bounds has placed,
How long those perishable forms shall last;

Nor can they last beyond the time assign'd
By that all-seeing and all-making Mind:
Shorten their hours they may, for will is free,
But never pass the appointed destiny.
So men oppress'd, when weary of their breath,
Throw off the burden, and suborn their death.
Then since those forms begin, and have their end,
On some unalter'd cause they sure depend:
Parts of the whole are we; but God the whole,
Who gives us life, and animating soul.
For nature cannot from a part derive
That being, which the whole can only give:
He perfect, stable; but imperfect we,
Subject to change, and different in degree:
Plants, beasts, and man, and, as our organs are,
We more or less of his perfection share.
But by a long descent, the ethereal fire
Corrupts; and forms, the mortal part, expire:
As he withdraws his virtue, so they pass,
And the same matter makes another mass.
This law the omniscient Power was pleased to give,
That every kind should by succession live:
That individuals die, his will ordains;
The propagated species still remains.
The monarch oak, the patriarch of the trees,
Shoots rising up, and spreads by slow degrees;
Three centuries he grows, and three he stays
Supreme in state, and in three more decays;
So wears the paving pebble in the street,
And towns and towers their fatal periods meet;
So rivers, rapid once, now naked lie, [dry:
Forsaken of their springs, and leave their channels
So man, at first a drop, dilates with heat;
Then form'd, the little heart begins to beat;

Secret he feeds, unknowing, in the cell;
At length, for hatching ripe, he breaks the shell,
And struggles into breath, and cries for aid;
Then, helpless, in his mother's lap is laid:
He creeps, he walks, and issuing into man,
Grudges their life, from whence his own began;
Reckless of laws, affects to rule alone,
Anxious to reign, and restless on the throne:
First vegetive, then feels, and reasons last;
Rich of three souls, and lives all three to waste.
Some thus; but thousands more in flower of age:
For few arrive to run the latter stage.
Sunk in the first, in battle some are slain,
And others whelm'd beneath the stormy main.
What makes all this, but Jupiter the king,
At whose command we perish and we spring?
Then 'tis our best, since thus ordain'd to die,
To make a virtue of necessity;
Take what he gives, since to rebel is vain:
The bad grows better, which we well sustain;
And could we choose the time, and choose aright,
'Tis best to die, our honour at the height,
When we have done our ancestors no shame,
But served our friends, and well secured our fame.
Then should we wish our happy life to close,
And leave no more for fortune to dispose:
So should we make our death a glad relief
From future shame, from sickness, and from grief;
Enjoying, while we live, the present hour,
And dying in our excellence and flower.
Then round our death-bed every friend should run,
And joy us of our conquest, early won;
While the malicious world, with envious tears,
Should grudge our happy end, and wish it theirs.

Since then our Arcite is with honour dead,
Why should we mourn, that he so soon is freed,
Or call untimely what the gods decreed?
With grief as just, a friend may be deplored,
From a foul prison to free air restored.
Ought he to thank his kinsman, or his wife,
Could tears recall him into wretched life?
Their sorrow hurts themselves; on him is lost;
And worse than both, offends his happy ghost.
What then remains, but after past annoy,
To take the good vicissitude of joy;
To thank the gracious gods for what they give;
Possess our souls, and while we live, to live?
Ordain we then two sorrows to combine,
And in one point the extremes of grief to join,
That, thence resulting, joy may be renew'd,
As jarring notes in harmony conclude.
Then I propose, that Palamon shall be
In marriage join'd with beauteous Emily;
For which already I have gain'd the assent
Of my free people in full parliament.
Long love to her has borne the faithful knight,
And well deserved, had fortune done him right:
'Tis time to mend her fault; since Emily
By Arcite's death from former vows is free.
If you, fair sister, ratify the accord,
And take him for your husband and your lord,
'Tis no dishonour to confer your grace
On one descended from a royal race:
And were he less, yet years of service past
From grateful souls exact reward at last:
Pity is heaven's and yours; nor can she find
A throne so soft as in a woman's mind.'

He said; she blush'd; and as o'erawed by migh
Seem'd to give Theseus what she gave the knigh
Then turning to the Theban, thus he said:
'Small arguments are needful to persuade
Your temper to comply with my command;'
And speaking thus, he gave Emilia's hand.
Smiled Venus, to behold her own true knight
Obtain the conquest, though he lost the fight,
And bless'd with nuptial bliss the sweet laborio
night.
Eros and Anteros, on either side,
One fired the bridegroom, and one warm'd t
bride;
And long-attending Hymen from above
Shower'd on the bed the whole Idalian grove.
All of a tenor was their after-life;
No day discolour'd with domestic strife;
No jealousy, but mutual truth believed,
Secure repose, and kindness undeceived.
Thus Heaven, beyond the compass of his thought
Sent him the blessing he so dearly bought.
So may the queen of Love long duty bless,
And all true lovers find the same success!

SIGISMONDA AND GUISCARDO,

FROM

BOCCACE.

WHILE Norman Tancred in Salerno reign'd,
The title of a gracious prince he gain'd;
Till turn'd a tyrant in his latter days,
He lost the lustre of his former praise;
And from the bright meridian where he stood,
Descending, dipp'd his hands in lovers' blood.
This prince, of fortune's favour long possess'd,
Yet was with one fair daughter only bless'd;
And bless'd he might have been with her alone:
But O! how much more happy, had he none!
She was his care, his hope, and his delight,
Most in his thought, and ever in his sight:
Next, nay beyond his life, he held her dear;
She lived by him, and now he lived in her.
For this, when ripe for marriage, he delay'd
Her nuptial bands, and kept her long a maid;
As envying any else should share a part
Of what was his, and claiming all her heart.
At length, as public decency required,
And all his vassals eagerly desired,

With mind averse, he rather underwent
His people's will, than gave his own consent:
So was she torn, as from a lover's side,
And made, almost in his despite, a bride.
Short were her marriage joys; for in the prime
Of youth, her lord expired before his time;
And to her father's court, in little space
Restored anew, she held a higher place;
More loved, and more exalted into grace.
This princess, fresh, and young, and fair, and wise,
The worship'd idol of her father's eyes,
Did all her sex in every grace exceed,
And had more wit beside than women need.
Youth, health, and ease, and most an amorous mind,
To second nuptials had her thoughts inclined;
And former joys had left a secret sting behind.
But, prodigal in every other grant,
Her sire left unsupplied her only want;
And she, betwixt her modesty and pride,
Her wishes, which she could not help, would hide.
Resolved at last to lose no longer time,
And yet to please herself without a crime,
She cast her eyes around the court, to find
A worthy subject suiting to her mind,
To him in holy nuptials to be tied,
A seeming widow, and a secret bride.
Among the train of courtiers, one she found
With all the gifts of bounteous nature crown'd;
Of gentle blood, but one whose niggard fate
Had set him far below her high estate:
Guiscard his name was call'd, of blooming age,
Now squire to Tancred, and before, his page:

To him, the choice of all the shining crowd,
Her heart the noble Sigismonda vow'd.
Yet hitherto she kept her love conceal'd,
And with close graces every day beheld
The graceful youth; and every day increased
The raging fire that burn'd within her breast;
Some secret charm did all his acts attend,
And what his fortune wanted, hers could mend:
Till, as the fire will force its outward way,
Or, in the prison pent, consume the prey,
So long her earnest eyes on him were set,
At length their twisted rays together met;
And he, surprised, with humble joy survey'd
One sweet regard, shot by the royal maid:
Not well assured, while doubtful hopes he nursed,
A second glance came gliding like the first;
And he, who saw the sharpness of the dart,
Without defence received it in his heart.
In public though their passion wanted speech,
Yet mutual looks interpreted for each:
Time, ways, and means of meeting were denied;
But all those wants ingenious love supplied.
The inventive god, who never fails his part,
Inspires the wit, when once he warms the heart.
When Guiscard next was in the circle seen,
Where Sigismonda held the place of queen,
A hollow cane within her hand she brought,
But in the concave had enclosed a note:
With this she seem'd to play, and, as in sport,
Toss'd to her love, in presence of the court:
'Take it,' she said, 'and when your needs require,
This little brand will serve to light your fire.'
He took it with a bow, and soon divined
The seeming toy was not for naught design'd:

But when retired, so long with curious eyes
He view'd the present, that he found the prize.
Much was in little writ; and all convey'd
With cautious care, for fear to be betray'd
By some false confidant, or favourite maid.
The time, the place, the manner how to meet,
Were all in punctual order plainly writ:
But since a trust must be, she thought it best
To put it out of laymen's power at least,
And for their solemn vows prepared a priest.
Guiscard (her secret purpose understood)
With joy prepared to meet the coming good;
Nor pains nor danger was resolved to spare,
But use the means appointed by the fair.
Next the proud palace of Salerno stood
A mount of rough ascent, and thick with wood:
Through this a cave was dug with vast expense;
The work it seem'd of some suspicious prince,
Who, when abusing power with lawless might,
From public justice would secure his flight.
The passage, made by many a winding way,
Reach'd ev'n the room in which the tyrant lay.
Fit for his purpose, on a lower floor
He lodged, whose issue was an iron door,
From whence, by stairs descending to the ground,
In the blind grot a safe retreat he found.
Its outlet ended in a brake o'ergrown
With brambles, choked by time, and now unknown.
A rift there was, which from the mountain's height
Convey'd a glimmering and malignant light,
A breathing place to draw the damps away,
A twilight of an intercepted day.
The tyrant's den, whose use, though lost to fame,
Was now the apartment of the royal dame:

The cavern, only to her father known,
By him was to his darling daughter shown.
Neglected long, she let the secret rest,
Till love recall'd it to her labouring breast,
And hinted as the way by Heaven design'd
The teacher, by the means he taught, to blind.
What will not women do, when need inspires
Their wit, or love their inclination fires?
Though jealousy of state the invention found,
Yet love refined upon the former ground;
That way the tyrant had reserved, to fly
Pursuing hate, now served to bring two lovers nigh.
The dame, who long in vain had kept the key,
Bold by desire, explored the secret way;
Now tried the stairs, and wading through the night,
Search'd all the deep recess, and issued into light.
All this her letter had so well explain'd,
The instructed youth might compass what remain'd:
The cavern-mouth alone was hard to find,
Because the path, disused, was out of mind;
But in what quarter of the copse it lay,
His eye by certain level could survey:
Yet (for the wood perplex'd with thorns he knew)
A frock of leather o'er his limbs he drew;
And thus provided, search'd the brake around,
Till the choked entry of the cave he found.
Thus, all prepared, the promised hour arrived,
So long expected, and so well contrived;
With Love to friend, the impatient lover went,
Fenced from the thorns, and trod the deep descent.
The conscious priest, who was suborn'd before,
Stood ready posted at the postern-door;
The maids in distant rooms were sent to rest,
And nothing wanted but the invited guest.

He came, and knocking thrice, without delay,
The longing lady heard, and turn'd the key;
At once invaded him with all her charms,
And the first step he made, was in her arms:
The leathern outside, boisterous as it was,
Gave way, and bent beneath her strict embrace:
On either side the kisses flew so thick,
That neither he nor she had breath to speak.
The holy man, amazed at what he saw,
Made haste to sanctify the bliss by law:
And mutter'd fast the matrimony o'er,
For fear committed sin should get before.
His work perform'd, he left the pair alone,
Because he knew he could not go too soon;
His presence odious, when his task was done.
What thoughts he had, beseems not me to say;
Though some surmise he went to fast and pray,
And needed both, to drive the tempting thoughts
away.

The foe once gone, they took their full delight;
'Twas restless rage, and tempest all the night:
For greedy love each moment would employ,
And grudged the shortest pauses of their joy.

Thus were their loves auspiciously begun,
And thus with secret care were carried on:
The stealth itself did appetite restore,
And look'd so like a sin, it pleased the more.

The cave was now become a common way;
The wicket, often open'd, knew the key:
Love rioted secure, and long enjoy'd,
Was ever eager, and was never cloy'd.

But as extremes are short of ill and good,
And tides, at highest mark, regorge the flood;
So fate, that could no more improve their joy,
Took a malicious pleasure to destroy.

Tancred, who fondly loved, and whose delight
Was placed in his fair daughter's daily sight;
Of custom, when his state affairs were done,
Would pass his pleasing hours with her alone;
And, as a father's privilege allow'd,
Without attendance of the officious crowd.
It happen'd once, that when in heat of day
He tried to sleep, as was his usual way,
The balmy slumber fled his wakeful eyes,
And forced him, in his own despite, to rise:
Of sleep forsaken, to relieve his care,
He sought the conversation of the fair:
But with her train of damsels she was gone,
In shady walks the scorching heat to shun.
He would not violate that sweet recess,
And found besides a welcome heaviness
That seized his eyes; and slumber, which forgot,
When call'd before to come, now came unsought.
From light retired, behind his daughter's bed,
He for approaching sleep composed his head.
A chair was ready, for that use design'd,
So quilted, that he lay at ease reclined;
The curtains closely drawn, the light to screen,
As if he had contrived to lie unseen:
Thus cover'd with an artificial night,
Sleep did his office soon, and seal'd his sight.
With Heaven averse, in this ill-omen'd hour,
Was Guiscard summon'd to the secret bower,
And the fair nymph, with expectation fired,
From her attending damsels was retired:
For, true to love, she measured time so right,
As not to miss one moment of delight.
The garden, seated on the level floor,
She left behind, and locking every door,

Thought all secure; but little did she know,
Blind to her fate, she had enclosed her foe.
Attending Guiscard, in his leathern frock,
Stood ready, with his thrice-repeated knock:
Thrice with a doleful sound the jarring grate
Rung deaf, and hollow, and presaged their fate.
The door unlock'd, to known delight they haste,
And panting in each other's arms, embraced;
Rush to the conscious bed, a mutual freight,
And heedless press it with their wonted weight.
The sudden bound awaked the sleeping sire,
And show'd a sight no parent can desire:
His opening eyes at once with odious view
The love discover'd, and the lover knew:
He would have cried; but hoping that he dreamt,
Amazement tied his tongue, and stopp'd the attempt.
The ensuing moment all the truth declared;
But now he stood collected and prepared,
For malice and revenge had put him on his guard.
So, like a lion that unheeded lay,
Dissembling sleep, and watchful to betray,
With inward rage he meditates his prey.
The thoughtless pair, indulging their desires,
Alternate kindled, and then quench'd their fires;
Nor thinking in the shades of death they play'd,
Full of themselves, themselves alone survey'd,
And too secure, were by themselves betray'd.
Long time dissolved in pleasure thus they lay,
Till nature could no more suffice their play;
Then rose the youth, and through the cave again
Return'd; the princess mingled with her train.
Resolved his unripe vengeance to defer,
The royal spy, when now the coast was clear,

Sought not the garden, but retired unseen,
To brood in secret on his gather'd spleen,
And methodise revenge: to death he grieved;
And, but he saw the crime, had scarce believed.
The appointment for the ensuing night he heard;
And therefore in the cavern had prepared
Two brawny yeomen of his trusty guard.
Scarce had unwary Guiscard set his foot
Within the foremost entrance of the grot,
When these in secret ambush ready lay,
And rushing on the sudden, seized the prey:
Encumber'd with his frock, without defence,
An easy prize, they led the prisoner thence,
And, as commanded, brought before the prince.
The gloomy sire, too sensible of wrong
To vent his rage in words, restrain'd his tongue;
And only said, 'Thus servants are preferr'd:
And trusted, thus their sovereigns they reward.
Had I not seen, had not these eyes received
Too clear a proof, I could not have believed.'
He paused, and choked the rest. The youth, who saw
His forfeit life abandon'd to the law;
The judge the accuser, and the offence to him
Who had both power and will to avenge the crime,
No vain defence prepared, but thus replied:
'The faults of love by love are justified:
With unresisted might the monarch reigns;
He levels mountains, and he raises plains;
And not regarding difference of degree,
Abased your daughter, and exalted me.'
This bold return with seeming patience heard,
The prisoner was remitted to the guard.

The sullen tyrant slept not all the night;
But lonely walking by a winking light,
Sobb'd, wept, and groan'd, and beat his wither'd breast,
But would not violate his daughter's rest;
Who long expecting lay, for bliss prepared,
Listening for noise, and grieved that none she heard;
Oft rose, and oft in vain employ'd the key,
And oft accused her lover of delay;
And pass'd the tedious hours in anxious thoughts away.
The morrow came; and at his usual hour
Old Tancred visited his daughter's bower;
Her cheek (for such his custom was) he kiss'd,
Then bless'd her kneeling, and her maids dismiss'd.
The royal dignity thus far maintain'd,
Now left in private, he no longer feign'd;
But all at once his grief and rage appear'd,
And floods of tears ran trickling down his beard.
'O Sigismonda!' he began to say:
Thrice he began, and thrice was forced to stay,
Till words, with often trying, found their way:
'I thought, O Sigismonda, (but how blind
Are parents' eyes their children's faults to find!)
Thy virtue, birth, and breeding were above
A mean desire, and vulgar sense of love:
Nor less than sight and hearing could convince
So fond a father, and so just a prince,
Of such an unforeseen and unbelieved offence.
Then what indignant sorrow must I have,
To see thee lie subjected to my slave!
A man so smelling of the people's lee,
The court received him first for charity;

And since, with no degree of honour graced,
But only suffer'd, where he first was placed,
A grovelling insect still; and so design'd
By nature's hand, nor born of noble kind:
A thing, by neither man nor woman prized,
And scarcely known enough to be despised.
To what has Heaven reserved my age? Ah! why
Should man, when nature calls, not choose to die,
Rather than stretch the span of life, to find
Such ills as fate has wisely cast behind;
For those to feel, whom fond desire to live
Makes covetous of more than life can give!
Each has his share of good; and when 'tis gone,
The guest, though hungry, cannot rise too soon.
But I, expecting more, in my own wrong
Protracting life, have lived a day too long.
If yesterday could be recall'd again,
Ev'n now would I conclude my happy reign:
But 'tis too late, my glorious race is run,
And a dark cloud o'ertakes my setting sun.
Hadst thou not loved, or loving, saved the shame
If not the sin, by some illustrious name;
This little comfort had relieved my mind,
'Twas frailty, not unusual to thy kind:
But thy low fall beneath thy royal blood,
Shows downward appetite to mix with mud.
Thus, not the least excuse is left for thee,
Nor the least refuge for unhappy me.
'For him I have resolved, whom by surprise
I took, and scarce can call it, in disguise:
For such was his attire, as with intent
Of nature, suited to his mean descent:
The harder question yet remains behind,

What pains a parent and a prince can find
To punish an offence of this degenerate kind.
'As I have loved, and yet I love thee more
Than ever father loved a child before;
So, that indulgence draws me to forgive;
Nature, that gave thee life, would have thee live.
But, as a public parent of the state,
My justice, and thy crime, requires thy fate.
Fain would I choose a middle course to steer;
Nature's too kind, and justice too severe:
Speak for us both, and to the balance bring
On either side, the father and the king.
Heaven knows, my heart is bent to favour thee;
Make it but scanty weight, and leave the rest
to me.'
Here stopping with a sigh, he pour'd a flood
Of tears, to make his last expression good.
She, who had heard him speak, nor saw alone
The secret conduct of her love was known,
But he was taken who her soul possess'd,
Felt all the pangs of sorrow in her breast;
And little wanted, but a woman's heart,
With cries and tears, had testified her smart:
But in-born worth, that fortune can control,
New strung and stiffer bent her softer soul;
The heroine assumed the woman's place,
Confirm'd her mind, and fortified her face.
Why should she beg, or what could she pretend,
When her stern father had condemn'd her friend?
Her life she might have had; but her despair
Of saving his had put it past her care:
Resolved on fate, she would not lose her breath,
But rather than not die, solicit death.



Fix'd on this thought, she, not as women use,
Her fault, by common frailty, would excuse,
But boldly justified her innocence,
And, while the fact was own'd, denied the offence;
Then with dry eyes, and with an open look,
She met his glance mid-way, and thus undaunted spoke:

'Tancred, I neither am disposed to make
Request for life, nor offer'd life to take,
Much less deny the deed; but, least of all,
Beneath pretended justice weakly fall:
My words to sacred truth shall be confined,
My deeds shall show the greatness of my mind.
That I have loved, I own; that still I love,
I call to witness all the powers above:
Yet more I own—to Guiscard's love I give
The small remaining time I have to live;
And, if beyond this life desire can be,
Not fate itself shall set my passion free.

'This first avow'd; nor folly warp'd my mind,
Nor the frail texture of the female kind
Betray'd my virtue; for too well I knew
What honour was, and honour had his due:
Before the holy priest my vows were tied,
So came I not a strumpet, but a bride.
This for my fame, and for the public voice:
Yet more, his merits justified my choice;
Which, had they not, the first election thine,
That bond dissolved, the next is freely mine:
Or, grant I err'd (which yet I must deny),
Had parents power ev'n second vows to tie,
Thy little care to mend my widow'd nights
Has forced me to recourse of marriage rites,
To fill an empty side, and follow known delights.

What have I done in this deserving blame?
State laws may alter—Nature's are the same;
Those are usurp'd on helpless womankind,
Made without our consent, and wanting power to bind.
'Thou, Tancred, better shouldst have understood,
That as thy father gave thee flesh and blood,
So gavest thou me: not from the quarry hew'd,
But of a softer mould, with sense endued;
Ev'n softer than thy own, of suppler kind,
More exquisite of taste, and more than man refined.
Nor need'st thou by thy daughter to be told,
Though now thy sprightly blood with age be cold,
Thou hast been young, and canst remember still,
That, when thou hadst the power, thou hadst the will;
And, from the past experience of thy fires,
Canst tell with what a tide our strong desires
Come rushing on in youth, and what their rage requires.
'And grant thy youth was exercised in arms,
When love no leisure found for softer charms;
My tender age in luxury was train'd,
With idle ease and pageants entertain'd;
My hours my own, my pleasures unrestrain'd:
So bred, no wonder if I took the bent
That seem'd ev'n warranted by thy consent;
For, when the father is too fondly kind,
Such seeds he sows, such harvest shall he find.
Blame then thyself, as reason's law requires,
(Since nature gave, and thou foment'st, my fires)
If still those appetites continue strong,
Then mayst consider I am yet but young:

Consider too, that, having been a wife,
I must have tasted of a better life;
And am not to be blamed if I renew,
By lawful means, the joys which then I knew.
Where was the crime, if pleasure I procured,
Young, and a woman, and to bliss inured?
That was my case, and this is my defence;
I pleased myself, I shunn'd incontinence,
And, urged by strong desires, indulged my sense.

'Left to myself, I must avow, I strove
From public shame to screen my secret love;
And, well acquainted with thy native pride,
Endeavour'd, what I could not help, to hide,
For which a woman's wit an easy way supplied.
How this, so well contrived, so closely laid,
Was known to thee, or by what chance betray'd,
Is not my care: to please thy pride alone,
I could have wish'd it had been still unknown.

'Nor took I Guiscard by blind fancy led,
Or hasty choice, as many women wed;
But with deliberate care and ripen'd thought,
At leisure first design'd before I wrought:
On him I rested, after long debate,
And not without considering fix'd my fate:
His flame was equal, though by mine inspired
(For so the difference of our birth required):
Had he been born like me, like me his love
Had first begun what mine was forced to move:
But thus beginning, thus we persevere;
Our passions yet continue what they were,
Nor length of trial makes our joys the less sincere.

'At this my choice, though not by thine allow'd
(Thy judgment herding with the common crowd),

Thou takest unjust offence; and, led by them,
Dost less the merit than the man esteem.
Too sharply, Tancred, by thy pride betray'd,
Hast thou against the laws of kind inveigh'd;
For all the offence is in opinion placed,
Which deems high birth by lowly choice debased!
This thought alone with fury fires thy breast
(For holy marriage justifies the rest),
That I have sunk the glories of the state,
And mix'd my blood with a plebeian mate:
In which I wonder thou shouldst oversee
Superior causes, or impute to me
The fault of fortune, or the fates' decree.
Or call it Heaven's imperial power alone,
Which moves on springs of justice, though unknown;
Yet this we see, though order'd for the best,
The bad exalted, and the good oppress'd;
Permitted laurels grace the lawless brow,
The unworthy raised, the worthy cast below.
'But leaving that: search we the secret springs,
And backward trace the principles of things,
There shall we find, that, when the world began,
One common mass composed the mould of man;
One paste of flesh on all degrees bestow'd,
And kneaded up alike with moistening blood.
The same Almighty Power inspired the frame
With kindled life, and form'd the souls the same;
The faculties of intellect and will
Dispensed with equal hand, disposed with equal skill;
Like liberty indulged, with choice of good or ill:
Thus born alike, from virtue first began
The difference that distinguish'd man from man:

He claim'd no title from descent of blood,
But that which made him noble made him good:
Warm'd with more particles of heavenly flame,
He wing'd his upward flight, and soar'd to fame;
The rest remain'd below, a tribe without a name.
'This law, though custom now diverts the course,
As nature's institute, is yet in force,
Uncancell'd, though disused; and he whose mind
Is virtuous, is alone of noble kind;
Though poor in fortune, of celestial race;
And he commits the crime who calls him base.
'Now lay the line, and measure all thy court
By inward virtue, not external port;
And find whom justly to prefer above
The man on whom my judgment placed my love:
So shalt thou see his parts and person shine,
And, thus compared, the rest a base degenerate line.
Nor took I, when I first survey'd thy court,
His valour or his virtues on report;
But trusted what I ought to trust alone,
Relying on thy eyes, and not my own:
Thy praise (and thine was then the public voice)
First recommended Guiscard to my choice.
Directed thus by thee, I look'd, and found
A man, I thought, deserving to be crown'd;
First by my father pointed to my sight,
Nor less conspicuous by his native light:
His mind, his mien, the features of his face,
Excelling all the rest of human race:
These were thy thoughts, and thou couldst judge aright,
Till interest made a jaundice in thy sight.

Or should I grant thou didst not rightly see,
Then thou wert first deceived, and I deceived by thee.
But if thou shalt allege, through pride of mind,
Thy blood with one of base condition join'd,
'Tis false, for 'tis not baseness to be poor;
His poverty augments thy crime the more;
Upbraids thy justice with the scant regard
Of worth: whom princes praise they should reward.
Are these the kings entrusted by the crowd
With wealth, to be dispensed for common good?
The people sweat not for their king's delight,
To enrich a pimp, or raise a parasite;
Theirs is the toil; and he who well has served
His country has his country's wealth deserved.
Ev'n mighty monarchs oft are meanly born,
And kings by birth to lowest rank return;
All subject to the power of giddy chance,
For fortune can depress, or can advance:
But true nobility is of the mind,
Not given by chance, and not to chance resign'd.
'For the remaining doubt of thy decree,
What to resolve, and how dispose of me,
Be warn'd to cast that useless care aside,
Myself alone will for myself provide:
If, in thy doting and decrepit age,
Thy soul, a stranger in thy youth to rage,
Begins in cruel deeds to take delight,
Gorge with my blood thy barbarous appetite;
For I so little am disposed to pray
For life, I would not cast a wish away.
Such as it is, the offence is all my own;
And what to Guiscard is already done,

Or to be done, is doom'd by thy decree,
That, if not executed first by thee,
Shall on my person be perform'd by me.
'Away! with women weep, and leave me here,
Fix'd, like a man, to die without a tear;
Or save, or slay us both this present hour,
'Tis all that fate has left within thy power!'
She said: nor did her father fail to find,
In all she spoke, the greatness of her mind;
Yet thought she was not obstinate to die,
Nor deem'd the death she promised was so nigh.
Secure in this belief, he left the dame,
Resolved to spare her life, and save her shame;
But that detested object to remove,
To wreak his vengeance, and to cure her love.
Intent on this, a secret order sign'd,
The death of Guiscard to his guards enjoin'd:
Strangling was chosen, and the night the time;
A mute revenge, and blind as was the crime:
His faithful heart, a bloody sacrifice,
Torn from his breast, to glut the tyrant's eyes,
Closed the severe command; for, slaves to pay,
What kings decree, the soldier must obey:
Waged against foes; and when the wars are o'er,
Fit only to maintain despotic power:
Dangerous to freedom, and desired alone
By kings who seek an arbitrary throne.
Such were these guards; as ready to have slain
The prince himself, allured with greater gain:
So was the charge perform'd with better will,
By men inured to blood and exercised in ill.
Now, though the sullen sire had eased his mind,
The pomp of his revenge was yet behind,
A pomp prepared to grace the present he design'd,

A goblet rich with gems, and rough with gold,
Of depth and breadth the precious pledge to hold
With cruel care he chose: the hollow part
Enclosed, the lid conceal'd, the lover's heart.
Then of his trusted mischiefs one he sent,
And bade him with these words the gift present:
'Thy father sends thee this, to cheer thy breast,
And glad thy sight with what thou lovest the best
As thou hast pleased his eyes, and joy'd his mind
With what he loved the most of human kind.'
Ere this, the royal dame, who well had weigh
The consequence of what her sire had said,
Fix'd on her fate, against the expected hour
Procured the means to have it in her power:
For this, she had distill'd with early care
The juice of simples friendly to despair,
A magazine of death; and thus prepared,
Secure to die, the fatal message heard;
Then smiled severe; nor with a troubled look,
Or trembling hand, the funeral present took;
Ev'n kept her countenance, when the lid, remove
Disclosed the heart unfortunately loved:
She needed not be told within whose breast
It lodged; the message had explain'd the rest.
Or not amazed, or hiding her surprise,
She sternly on the bearer fix'd her eyes;
Then thus: 'Tell Tancred, on his daughter's pa
The gold, though precious, equals not the heart
But he did well to give his best; and I,
Who wish'd a worthier urn, forgive his poverty!'
At this, she curb'd a groan, that else had com
And, pausing, view'd the present in the tomb;
Then to the heart adored devoutly glued
Her lips, and, raising it, her speech renew'd:

'Ev'n from my day of birth to this, the bound
Of my unhappy being, I have found
My father's care and tenderness express'd,
But this last act of love excels the rest:
For this so dear a present, bear him back
The best return that I can live to make.'

The messenger despatch'd, again she view'd
The loved remains, and, sighing, thus pursued:
'Source of my life, and lord of my desires,
In whom I lived, with whom my soul expires;
Poor heart! no more the spring of vital heat,
Cursed be the hands that tore thee from thy seat!
The course is finish'd which thy fates decreed,
And thou from thy corporeal prison freed:
Soon hast thou reach'd the goal with mended pace,
A world of woes despatch'd in little space:
Forced by thy worth, thy foe, in death become
Thy friend, has lodged thee in a costly tomb.
There yet remain'd thy funeral exequies,
The weeping tribute of thy widow's eyes;
And those indulgent Heaven has found the way
That I before my death have leave to pay.
My father ev'n in cruelty is kind,
Or Heaven has turn'd the malice of his mind
To better uses than his hate design'd,
And made the insult which in his gift appears
The means to mourn thee with my pious tears;
Which I will pay thee down before I go,
And save myself the pains to weep below,
If souls can weep; though once I meant to meet
My fate with face unmoved, and eyes unwet:
Yet since I have thee here in narrow room,
My tears shall set thee first afloat within thy tomb:

Then (as I know thy spirit hovers nigh)
Under thy friendly conduct will I fly
To regions unexplored, secure to share
Thy state; nor hell shall punishment appear;
And heaven is double heaven if thou art there!'
She said: her brim-full eyes, that ready stood,
And only wanted will to weep a flood,
Released their watery store, and pour'd amain,
Like clouds low hung, a sober shower of rain;
Mute solemn sorrow, free from female noise,
Such as the majesty of grief destroys:
For, bending o'er the cup, the tears she shed
Seem'd by the posture to discharge her head,
O'er-fill'd before; and oft (her mouth applied
To the cold heart) she kiss'd at once, and cried.
Her maids, who stood amazed, nor knew the cause
Of her complaining, nor whose heart it was,
Yet all due measures of her mourning kept,
Did office at the dirge, and by infection wept;
And oft inquired the occasion of her grief
(Unanswer'd but by sighs), and offer'd vain relief.
At length, her stock of tears already shed,
She wiped her eyes, she raised her drooping head,
And thus pursued: 'O ever-faithful heart!
I have perform'd the ceremonial part,
The decencies of grief: it rests behind,
That, as our bodies were, our souls be join'd:
To thy whate'er abode my shade convey,
And, as an elder ghost, direct the way.'
She said; and bade the vial to be brought,
Where she before had brew'd the deadly draught:
First pouring out the medicinable bane,
The heart her tears had rinsed she bathed again;

Then down her throat the death securely throws,
And quaffs a long oblivion of her woes.
This done, she mounts the genial bed, and there
(Her body first composed with honest care)
Attends the welcome rest: her hands yet hold,
Close to her heart, the monumental gold;
Nor further word she spoke, but closed her sight,
And, quiet, sought the covert of the night.
The damsels, who the while in silence mourn'd,
Not knowing, nor suspecting, death suborn'd;
Yet, as their duty was, to Tancred sent,
Who, conscious of the occasion, fear'd the event.
Alarm'd, and with presaging heart he came,
And drew the curtains, and exposed the dame
To loathsome light; then, with a late relief,
Made vain efforts to mitigate her grief.
She, what she could, excluding day, her eyes
Kept firmly seal'd, and sternly thus replies:
'Tancred, restrain thy tears, unsought by me,
And sorrow, unavailing now to thee.
Did ever man before afflict his mind,
To see the effect of what himself design'd?
Yet if thou hast remaining in thy heart
Some sense of love, some unextinguish'd part
Of former kindness, largely once profess'd,
Let me by that adjure thy harden'd breast
Not to deny thy daughter's last request.
The secret love, which I so long enjoy'd,
And still conceal'd, to gratify thy pride,
Thou hast disjoin'd; but, with my dying breath,
Seek not, I beg thee, to disjoin our death:
Where'er his corpse by thy command is laid,
Thither let mine in public be convey'd;

Exposed in open view, and side by side,
Acknowledged as a bridegroom and a bride.'
The prince's anguish hinder'd his reply;
And she, who felt her fate approaching nigh,
Seized the cold heart, and heaving to her breast,
'Here, precious pledge,' she said, 'securely rest
These accents were her last; the creeping death
Benumb'd her senses first, then stopp'd her breat
Thus she for disobedience justly died;
The sire was justly punish'd for his pride:
The youth, least guilty, suffer'd for the offence
Of duty violated to his prince,
Who, late repenting of his cruel deed,
One common sepulchre for both decreed,
Entomb'd the wretched pair in royal state,
And on their monument inscribed their fate.



DRYDEN.

CYMON AND IPHIGENIA,

AND

THEODORE AND HONORIA.



DRYDEN.

CYMON AND IPHIGENIA.

ETC.



The fool of nature stood with stupid eyes,
And gaping mouth that testified surprize.

R. Westall R.A. del.

W. Greatbatch Sc.

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DRYDEN.

CYMON AND IPHIGENIA.

FROM BOCCACE.

POETA LOQUITUR.

OLD as I am, for ladies' love unfit,
The power of beauty I remember yet,
Which once inflamed my soul, and still inspires my wit.
If love be folly, the severe divine[1]
Has felt that folly, though he censures mine;
Pollutes the pleasures of a chaste embrace,
Acts what I write, and propagates in grace,
With riotous excess, a priestly race.
Suppose him free, and that I forge the offence,
He show'd the way, perverting first my sense:
In malice witty, and with venom fraught,
He makes me speak the things I never thought.
Compute the gains of his ungovern'd zeal;
Ill suits his cloth the praise of railing well!

[1] Jeremy Collier, against whom this exordium is a coarse libel.

The world will think that what we loosely write,
Though now arraign'd, he read with some delight;
Because he seems to chew the cud again,
When his broad comment makes the text too plain:
And teaches more in one explaining page,
Than all the double meanings of the stage.
What needs he paraphrase on what we mean?
We were at worst but wanton, he 's obscene.
I nor my fellows nor myself excuse;
But love 's the subject of the comic muse:
Nor can we write without it, nor would you
A tale of only dry instruction view;
Nor love is always of a vicious kind,
But oft to virtuous acts inflames the mind;
Awakes the sleepy vigour of the soul,
And, brushing o'er, adds motion to the pool.
Love, studious how to please, improves our parts
With polish'd manners, and adorns with arts.
Love first invented verse, and form'd the rhyme,
The motion measured, harmonised the chime:
To liberal acts enlarged the narrow soul'd;
Soften'd the fierce, and made the coward bold:
The world, when waste, he peopled with increase,
And warring nations reconciled in peace.
Ormond, the first, and all the fair may find,
In this one legend, to their fame design'd,
When beauty fires the blood, how love exalts the mind.

In that sweet isle, where Venus keeps her court,
And every Grace, and all the Loves, resort;
Where either sex is form'd of softer earth,
And takes the bent of pleasure from their birth;

There lived a Cyprian lord, above the rest
Wise, wealthy, with a numerous issue blest:
But as no gift of fortune is sincere,
Was only wanting in a worthy heir.
His eldest born, a goodly youth to view,
Excell'd the rest in shape and outward shew;
Fair, tall, his limbs with due proportion join'd,
But of a heavy, dull, degenerate mind.
His soul belied the features of his face;
Beauty was there, but beauty in disgrace:
A clownish mien, a voice with rustic sound,
And stupid eyes that ever loved the ground.
He look'd like nature's error; as the mind
And body were not of a piece design'd,
But made for two, and by mistake in one were join'd.
The ruling rod, the father's forming care,
Were exercised in vain on wit's despair;
The more inform'd, the less he understood,
And deeper sunk, by floundering in the mud.
Now scorn'd of all, and grown the public shame,
The people from Galesus changed his name,
And Cymon call'd, which signifies a brute;
So well his name did with his nature suit.
His father, when he found his labour lost,
And care employ'd, that answer'd not the cost,
Chose an ungrateful object to remove,
And loath'd to see what nature made him love;
So to his country-farm the fool confined:
Rude work well suited with a rustic mind.
Thus to the wilds the sturdy Cymon went,
A squire among the swains, and pleased with banishment,
His corn and cattle were his only care,
And his supreme delight a country-fair.

It happen'd on a summer's holiday,
That to the greenwood-shade he took his way;
For Cymon shunn'd the church, and used not much
to pray.
His quarter-staff, which he could ne'er forsake,
Hung half before and half behind his back:
He trudged along, unknowing what he sought,
And whistled as he went, for want of thought.
By chance conducted, or by thirst constrain'd,
The deep recesses of the grove he gain'd;
Where in a plain, defended by the wood,
Crept through the matted grass a crystal flood,
By which an alabaster fountain stood;
And on the margin of the fount was laid
(Attended by her slaves) a sleeping maid:
Like Dian, and her nymphs, when tired with sport,
To rest by cool Eurotas they resort.
The dame herself the goddess well express'd,
Not more distinguish'd by her purple vest,
Than by the charming features of her face,
And ev'n in slumber a superior grace:
Her comely limbs composed with decent care,
Her body shaded with a slight simar:
Her bosom to the view was only bare;
Where two beginning paps were scarcely spied,
For yet their places were but signified.
The fanning wind upon her bosom blows;
To meet the fanning wind the bosom rose;
The fanning wind and purling streams continue her
repose.
The fool of nature stood with stupid eyes
And gaping mouth, that testified surprise,
Fix'd on her face, nor could remove his sight;
New as he was to love, and novice in delight:

Long mute he stood, and leaning on his staff,
His wonder witness'd with an idiot laugh;
Then would have spoke, but by his glimmering sense
First found his want of words, and fear'd offence;
Doubted for what he was he should be known,
By his clown accent and his country tone.
Through the rude chaos, thus the running light
Shot the first ray that pierced the native night:
Then day and darkness in the mass were mix'd,
Till gather'd in a globe, the beams were fix'd:
Last shone the sun, who, radiant in his sphere,
Illumined heaven and earth, and roll'd around the year.
So reason in this brutal soul began:
Love made him first suspect he was a man;
Love made him doubt his broad barbarian sound;
By love his want of words and wit he found:
That sense of want prepared the future way
To knowledge, and disclosed the promise of a day.
What not his father's care, nor tutor's art,
Could plant with pains in his unpolish'd heart,
The best instructor, Love, at once inspired;
As barren grounds to fruitfulness are fired:
Love taught him shame, and shame with love at strife,
Soon taught the sweet civilities of life.
His gross material soul at once could find
Somewhat in her excelling all her kind;
Exciting a desire till then unknown,
Somewhat unfound, or found in her alone.
This made the first impression in his mind,
Above, but just above, the brutal kind:
For beasts can like, but not distinguish too,
Nor their own liking by reflection know;

Nor why they like or this or t'other face,
Or judge of this or that peculiar grace;
But love in gross, and stupidly admire;
As flies, allured by light, approach the fire.
Thus our man-beast, advancing by degrees,
First likes the whole, then separates what he sees;
On several parts a several praise bestows,
The ruby lips, the well-proportion'd nose,
The snowy skin, and raven-glossy hair,
The dimpled cheek, the forehead rising fair,
And ev'n in sleep itself a smiling air.
From thence his eyes descending view'd the rest,
Her plump round arms, white hands, and heaving breast:
Long on the last he dwelt, though every part
A pointed arrow sped to pierce his heart.
Thus in a trice a judge of beauty grown,
(A judge erected from a country clown)
He long'd to see her eyes, in slumber hid,
And wish'd his own to pierce within the lid:
He would have waked her, but restrain'd his thought;
And Love, new-born, the first good manners taught.
An awful fear his ardent wish withstood,
Nor durst disturb the goddess of the wood;
For such she seem'd by her celestial face,
Excelling all the rest of human race:
And things divine, by common sense he knew,
Must be devoutly seen at distant view.
So checking his desire, with trembling heart
Gazing he stood, nor would nor could depart;
Fix'd as a pilgrim wilder'd in his way,
Who dares not stir by night for fear to stray,
But stands with awful eyes to watch the dawn of day.

At length awaking, Iphigene the fair
(So was the beauty call'd who caused his care)
Unclosed her eyes, and double day reveal'd,
While those of all her slaves in sleep are seal'd.
The slavering cudden, propp'd upon his staff,
Stood ready gaping with a grinning laugh,
To welcome her awake, nor durst begin
To speak, but wisely kept the fool within.
Then she:—'What makes you, Cymon, here alone?'
(For Cymon's name was round the country known,
Because descended of a noble race,
And for a soul ill sorted with his face.)
But still the sot stood silent with surprise,
With fix'd regard on her new-open'd eyes,
And in his breast received the envenom'd dart,
A tickling pain that pleased amid the smart.
But conscious of her form, with quick distrust
She saw his sparkling eyes, and fear'd his brutal lust.
This to prevent, she waked her sleepy crew,
And rising hasty took a short adieu!
Then Cymon first his rustic voice essay'd,
With proffer'd service to the parting maid
To see her safe: his hand she long denied,
But took at length, ashamed of such a guide.
So Cymon led her home, and leaving there,
No more would to his country clowns repair,
But sought his father's house with better mind,
Refusing in the farm to be confined.
The father wonder'd at the son's return,
And knew not whether to rejoice or mourn;
But doubtfully received, expecting still
To learn the secret causes of his alter'd will.
Nor was he long delay'd: the first request
He made, was, like his brothers to be dress'd,
And, as his birth required, above the rest.

With ease his suit was granted by his sire,
Distinguishing his heir by rich attire.
His body thus adorn'd, he next design'd
With liberal arts to cultivate his mind:
He sought a tutor of his own accord,
And studied lessons he before abhorr'd.
Thus the man-child advanced, and learn'd so fast,
That in short time his equals he surpass'd;
His brutal manners from his breast exiled,
His mien he fashion'd, and his tongue he filed;
In every exercise of all admired,
He seem'd, nor only seem'd, but was inspired:—
Inspired by love, whose business is to please;
He rode, he fenced, he moved with graceful ease;
More famed for sense, for courtly carriage more,
Than for his brutal folly, known before.
What then of alter'd Cymon shall we say,
But that the fire which choked in ashes lay,
A load too heavy for his soul to move,
Was upward blown below, and brush'd away by Love?
Love made an active progress through his mind,
The dusky parts he clear'd, the gross refined,
The drowsy waked; and as he went, impress'd
The Maker's image on the human beast.
Thus was the man amended by desire,
And though he loved perhaps with too much fire,
His father all his faults with reason scann'd,
And liked an error of the better hand;
Excused the excess of passion in his mind,
By flames too fierce, perhaps too much refined.
So Cymon, since his sire indulged his will,
Impetuous loved, and would be Cymon still;
Galesus he disown'd, and chose to bear [fair.
The name of fool confirm'd, and bishop'd by the

To Cipseus by his friends his suit he moved;
Cipseus, the father of the fair he loved:
But he was pre-engaged by former ties,
While Cymon was endeavouring to be wise;
And Iphigene, obliged by former vows,
Had given her faith to wed a foreign spouse.
Her sire and she to Rhodian Pasimond,
Though both repenting, were by promise bound,
Nor could retract; and thus, as fate decreed,
Though better loved, he spoke too late to speed.
The doom was past, the ship already sent
Did all his tardy diligence prevent:
Sigh'd to herself the fair unhappy maid,
While stormy Cymon thus in secret said:
'The time is come for Iphigene to find
The miracle she wrought upon my mind:
Her charms have made me man, her ravish'd love
In rank shall place me with the bless'd above;
For mine by love, by force she shall be mine,
Or death, if force should fail, shall finish my design!'
Resolved he said; and rigg'd with speedy care
A vessel strong, and well equipp'd for war:
The secret ship with chosen friends he stored;
And, bent to die or conquer, went aboard.
Ambush'd he lay behind the Cyprian shore,
Waiting the sail that all his wishes bore;
Nor long expected, for the following tide
Sent out the hostile ship and beauteous bride.
To Rhodes the rival bark directly steer'd,
When Cymon sudden at her back appear'd,
And stopp'd her flight. then, standing on his prow,
In haughty terms he thus defied the foe:—
'Or strike your sails at summons, or prepare
To prove the last extremities of war!'

Thus warn'd, the Rhodians for the fight provide;
Already were the vessels side by side,
These obstinate to save, and those to seize the bride.
But Cymon soon his crooked grapples cast,
Which with tenacious hold his foes embraced,
And, arm'd with sword and shield, amid the press he pass'd.
Fierce was the fight, but hastening to his prey,
By force the furious lover freed his way:
Himself alone dispersed the Rhodian crew,
The weak disdain'd, the valiant overthrew:
Cheap conquest for his following friends remain'd,
He reap'd the field, and they but only glean'd.
His victory confess'd, the foes retreat,
And cast their weapons at the victor's feet;
Whom thus he cheer'd: 'O Rhodian youth! I fought
For love alone, nor other booty sought;
Your lives are safe; your vessel I resign,
Yours be your own, restoring what is mine.
In Iphigene I claim my rightful due,
Robb'd by my rival, and detain'd by you:
Your Pasimond a lawless bargain drove,
The parent could not sell the daughter's love;
Or if he could, my love disdains the laws,
And, like a king, by conquest gains his cause:
Where arms take place, all other pleas are vain;
Love taught me force, and force shall love maintain.
You, what by strength you could not keep, release;
And at an easy ransom buy your peace.'
Fear, on the conquer'd side, soon sign'd the accord,
And Iphigene to Cymon was restored:
While to his arms the blushing bride he took,
To seeming sadness she composed her look,

As if by force subjected to his will;
Though pleased, dissembling, and a woman still.
And (for she wept) he wiped her falling tears,
And pray'd her to dismiss her empty fears;
'For yours I am,' he said, 'and have deserved
Your love much better, whom so long I served,
Than he to whom your formal father tied
Your vows; and sold a slave, not sent a bride.'
Thus, while he spoke, he seized the willing prey;
As Paris bore the Spartan spouse away.
Faintly she scream'd, and ev'n her eyes confess'd
She rather would be thought, than was, distress'd.
Who now exults but Cymon in his mind;
Vain hopes, and empty joys of human kind,
Proud of the present, to the future blind!
Secure of fate while Cymon ploughs the sea,
And steers to Candy with his conquer'd prey,
Scarce the third glass of measured hours was run,
When like a fiery meteor sunk the sun,
The promise of a storm; the shifting gales
Forsake by fits and fill the flagging sails:
Hoarse murmurs of the main from far were heard,
And night came on, not by degrees prepared,
But all at once; at once the winds arise,
The thunders roll, the forky lightning flies.
In vain the master issues out commands,
In vain the trembling sailors ply their hands:
The tempest unforeseen prevents their care,
And from the first they labour in despair.
The giddy ship, betwixt the winds and tides
Forced back and forwards, in the circle rides,
Stunn'd with the different blows; then shoots amain;
Till counterbuff'd she stops, and sleeps again.

Not more aghast the proud archangel fell,
Plunged from the height of heaven to deepest hell,
Than stood the lover, of his love possess'd,
Now cursed the more, the more he had been bless'd;
More anxious for her danger than his own,
Death he defies, but would be lost alone.
Sad Iphigene to womanish complaints
Adds pious prayers, and wearies all the saints.
Ev'n, if she could, her love she would repent;
But since she cannot, dreads the punishment:
Her forfeit faith, and Pasimond betray'd,
Are ever present, and her crime upbraid.
She blames herself, nor blames her lover less,
Augments her anger as her fears increase;
From her own back the burden would remove,
And lays the load on his ungovern'd love,
Which interposing durst, in Heaven's despite,
Invade and violate another's right:
The powers incensed, awhile deferr'd his pain,
And made him master of his vows in vain:
But soon they punish'd his presumptuous pride;
That for his daring enterprise she died,
Who rather not resisted than complied.
Then impotent of mind, with alter'd sense,
She hugg'd the offender, and forgave the offence;
Sex to the last: meantime with sails declined
The wandering vessel drove before the wind:
Toss'd and retoss'd, aloft and then alow,
Nor port they seek, nor certain course they know;
But every moment wait the coming blow.
Thus blindly driven, by breaking day they view'd
The land before them, and their fears renew'd;
The land was welcome, but the tempest bore
The threaten'd ship against a rocky shore.

A winding bay was near; to this they bent,
And just escaped; their force already spent
Secure from storms, and panting from the sea,
The land unknown at leisure they survey;
And saw (but soon their sickly sight withdrew)
The rising towers of Rhodes at distant view;
And cursed the hostile shore of Pasimond,
Saved from the seas, and shipwreck'd on the ground.
The frighted sailors tried their strength in vain
To turn the stern, and tempt the stormy main;
But the stiff wind withstood the labouring oar,
And forced them forward on the fatal shore:
The crooked keel now bites the Rhodian strand,
And the ship moor'd constrains the crew to land.
Yet still they might be safe because unknown;
But, as ill fortune seldom comes alone,
The vessel they dismiss'd was driven before,
Already shelter'd on their native shore: [cheer;
Known each, they know; but each with change of
The vanquish'd side exults; the victors fear
Not them but theirs, made prisoners ere they fight,
Despairing conquest, and deprived of flight.
The country rings around with loud alarms,
And raw in fields the rude militia swarms;
Mouths without hands, maintain'd at vast expense;
In peace a charge, in war a weak defence:
Stout once a month they march, a blustering band,
And ever, but in times of need, at hand.
This was the morn when, issuing on the guard,
Drawn up in rank and file they stood prepared
Of seeming arms to make a short essay,
Then hasten to be drunk, the business of the day.
The cowards would have fled, but that they knew
Themselves so many and their foes so few:

But crowding on, the last the first impel;
Till overborne with weight the Cyprians fell.
Cymon enslaved, who first the war begun,
And Iphigene once more is lost and won.
Deep in a dungeon was the captive cast,
Deprived of day, and held in fetters fast;
His life was only spared at their request,
Whom taken he so nobly had released:
But Iphigenia was the ladies' care;
Each in their turn address'd to treat the fair;
While Pasimond and his the nuptial feast prepare.
Her secret soul to Cymon was inclined,
But she must suffer what her fates assign'd;
So passive is the church of womankind!
What worse to Cymon could his fortune deal,
Roll'd to the lowest spoke of all her wheel?
It rested to dismiss the downward weight,
Or raise him upward to his former height:
The latter pleased; and love (concern'd the most)
Prepared the amends for what by love he lost.
The sire of Pasimond had left a son,
Though younger, yet for courage early known,
Ormisda call'd; to whom by promise tied,
A Rhodian beauty was the destined bride.
Cassandra was her name; above the rest
Renown'd for birth, with fortune amply bless'd.
Lysimachus, who ruled the Rhodian state,
Was then by choice their annual magistrate:
He loved Cassandra too with equal fire,
But fortune had not favour'd his desire;
Cross'd by her friends, by her not disapproved,
Nor yet preferr'd, or like Ormisda loved;
So stood the affair: some little hope remain'd,
That should his rival chance to lose, he gain'd.

Meantime young Pasimond his marriage press'd,
Ordain'd the nuptial day, prepared the feast;
And frugally resolved (the charge to shun,
Which would be double should he wed alone)
To join his brother's bridal with his own.
Lysimachus, oppress'd with mortal grief,
Received the news, and studied quick relief.
The fatal day approach'd: if force were used,
The magistrate his public trust abused;
To justice liable, as law required;
For when his office ceased, his power expired:
While power remain'd, the means were in his hand
By force to seize, and then forsake the land.
Betwixt extremes he knew not how to move,
A slave to fame, but more a slave to love.
Restraining others, yet himself not free,
Made impotent by power, debased by dignity.
Both sides he weigh'd: but after much debate,
The man prevail'd above the magistrate.
Love never fails to master what he finds,
But works a different way in different minds,
The fool enlightens, and the wise he blinds.
This youth proposing to possess and 'scape,
Began in murder, to conclude in rape.
Unpraised by me, though Heaven sometimes may bless
An impious act with undeserved success:
The great, it seems, are privileged alone
To punish all injustice but their own.
But here I stop, not daring to proceed;
Yet blush to flatter an unrighteous deed:
For crimes are but permitted, not decreed.
Resolved on force, his wit the prætor bent,
To find the means that might secure the event;

Not long he labour'd, for his lucky thought
In captive Cymon found the friend he sought;
The example pleased: the cause and crime the same;
An injured lover, and a ravish'd dame.
How much he durst he knew by what he dared;
The less he had to lose, the less he cared
To manage loathsome life, when love was the reward.

This ponder'd well, and fix'd on his intent,
In depth of night he for the prisoner sent;
In secret sent, the public view to shun,
Then with a sober smile he thus begun.
'The Powers above, who bounteously bestow
Their gifts and graces on mankind below,
Yet prove our merit first; nor blindly give
To such as are not worthy to receive:
For valour and for virtue they provide
Their due reward, but first they must be tried.
These fruitful seeds within your mind they sow'd,
'Twas yours to improve the talent they bestow'd:
They gave you to be born of noble kind,
They gave you love to lighten up your mind,
And purge the grosser parts: they gave you care
To please, and courage to deserve the fair.

'Thus far they tried you, and by proof they found
The grain intrusted in a grateful ground:
But still the great experiment remain'd,
They suffer'd you to lose the prize you gain'd;
That you might learn the gift was theirs alone:
And when restored to them the blessing own.
Restored it soon will be; the means prepared,
The difficulty smoothed, the danger shared:
Be but yourself, the care to me resign,
Then Iphigene is yours, Cassandra mine.

Your rival Pasimond pursues your life,
Impatient to revenge his ravish'd wife,
But yet not his; to-morrow is behind,
And Love our fortunes in one band has join'd:
Two brothers are our foes; Ormisda mine,
As much declared, as Pasimond is thine:
To-morrow must their common vows be tied;
With love to friend, and fortune for our guide,
Let both resolve to die, or each redeem a bride.
'Right I have none, nor hast thou much to plead;
'Tis force, when done, must justify the deed:
Our task perform'd, we next prepare for flight;
And let the losers talk in vain of right:
We with the fair will sail before the wind;
If they are grieved, I leave the laws behind.
Speak thy resolves; if now thy courage droop,
Despair in prison, and abandon hope;
But if thou darest in arms thy love regain,
(For liberty without thy love were vain)
Then second my design to seize the prey;
Or lead to second rape, for well thou know'st the way.'
Said Cymon, overjoy'd, 'Do thou propose
The means to fight, and only show the foes;
For from the first, when love had fired my mind,
Resolved I left the care of life behind.'
To this the bold Lysimachus replied,
'Let Heaven be neuter, and the sword decide:
The spousals are prepared, already play
The minstrels, and provoke the tardy day:
By this the brides are waked, their grooms are dress'd;
All Rhodes is summon'd to the nuptial feast,
All but myself, the sole unbidden guest.

Unbidden though I am, I will be there,
And, join'd by thee, intend to joy the fair.
'Now hear the rest; when day resigns the light,
And cheerful torches gild the jolly night,
Be ready at my call; my chosen few
With arms administer'd shall aid thy crew.
Then entering unexpected will we seize
Our destined prey, from men dissolved in ease,
By wine disabled, unprepared for fight;
And hastening to the seas suborn our flight:
The seas are ours, for I command the fort;
A ship well mann'd expects us in the port:
If they or if their friends the prize contest,
Death shall attend the man who dares resist.'
It pleased; the prisoner to his hold retired,
His troop with equal emulation fired,
All fix'd to fight, and all their wonted work required.
The sun arose; the streets were throng'd around,
The palace open'd, and the posts were crown'd:
The double bridegroom at the door attends
The expected spouse, and entertains the friends.
They meet, they lead to church; the priests invoke
The Powers, and feed the flames with fragrant smoke.
This done, they feast; and at the close of night
By kindled torches vary their delight;
These lead the lively dance, and those the brimming bowls invite.
Now at the appointed place and hour assign'd,
With souls resolved, the ravishers were join'd.
Three bands are form'd: the first is sent before,
To favour the retreat, and guard the shore:
The second at the palace-gate is placed;
And up the lofty stairs ascend the last:

A peaceful troop they seem with shining vests,
But coats of mail, beneath, secure their breasts.
Dauntless they enter, Cymon at their head,
And find the feast renew'd, the table spread
Sweet voices, mix'd with instrumental sounds,
Ascend the vaulted roof, the vaulted roof rebounds:
When like the harpies rushing through the hall
The sudden troop appears, the tables fall,
Their smoking load is on the pavement thrown;
Each ravisher prepares to seize his own:
The brides, invaded with a rude embrace,
Shriek out for aid, confusion fills the place:
Quick to redeem the prey, their plighted lords
Advance; the palace gleams with shining swords.
But late is all defence, and succour vain;
The rape is made, the ravishers remain:
Two sturdy slaves were only sent before,
To bear the purchased prize in safety to the shore.
The troop retires, the lovers close the rear,
With forward faces not confessing fear:
Backward they move, but scorn their pace to mend;
Then seek the stairs, and with slow haste descend.
Fierce Pasimond, their passage to prevent,
Thrust full on Cymon's back in his descent;
The blade return'd, unbathed, and to the handle bent:
Stout Cymon soon remounts, and cleft in two
His rival's head with one descending blow:
And as the next in rank Ormisda stood,
He turn'd the point: the sword, inured to blood,
Bored his unguarded breast, which pour'd a purple flood.
With vow'd revenge, the gathering crowd pursues,
The ravishers turn head, the fight renews;

The hall is heap'd with corps; the sprinkled gore
Besmears the walls, and floats the marble floor.
Dispersed at length, the drunken squadron flies;
The victors to their vessels bear the prize,
And hear, behind, loud groans and lamentable cries.
The crew with merry shouts their anchors weigh,
Then ply their oars, and brush the buxom sea;
While troops of gather'd Rhodians crowd the key.
What should the people do, when left alone?
The governor and government are gone;
The public wealth to foreign parts convey'd;
Some troops disbanded, and the rest unpaid.
Rhodes is the sovereign of the sea no more;
Their ships unrigg'd, and spent their naval store;
They neither could defend, nor can pursue,
But grinn'd their teeth, and cast a helpless view;
In vain with darts a distant war they try,
Short and more short the missive weapons fly.
Meanwhile the ravishers their crimes enjoy,
And flying sails and sweeping oars employ;
The cliffs of Rhodes in little space are lost,
Jove's isle they seek; nor Jove denies his coast.
In safety landed on the Candian shore,
With generous wines their spirits they restore;
There Cymon with his Rhodian friend resides,
Both court and wed, at once, the willing brides.
A war ensues, the Cretans own their cause,
Stiff to defend their hospitable laws:
Both parties lose by turns, and neither wins,
Till peace propounded by a truce begins.
The kindred of the slain forgive the deed,
But a short exile must for show precede:
The term expired, from Candia they remove;
And happy each, at home, enjoys his love.

THEODORE AND HONORIA.

FROM BOCCACE.

Of all the cities in Romanian lands,
The chief and most renown'd Ravenna stands:
Adorn'd in ancient times with arms and arts,
And rich inhabitants, with generous hearts.
But Theodore the Brave, above the rest,
With gifts of fortune and of nature bless'd,
The foremost place for wealth and honour held,
And all in feats of chivalry excell'd.
This noble youth to madness loved a dame
Of high degree, Honoria was her name:
Fair as the fairest, but of haughty mind,
And fiercer than became so soft a kind;
Proud of her birth (for equal she had none),
The rest she scorn'd; but hated him alone.
His gifts, his constant courtship, nothing gain'd;
For she, the more he loved, the more disdain'd:
He lived with all the pomp he could devise,
At tilts and tournaments obtain'd the prize,
But found no favour in his lady's eyes:
Relentless as a rock, the lofty maid
Turn'd all to poison that he did or said:
Nor prayers, nor tears, nor offer'd vows could move;
The work went backward; and the more he strove
To advance his suit, the further from her love.

Wearied at length, and wanting remedy,
He doubted oft, and oft resolved to die:
But pride stood ready to prevent the blow;
For who would die to gratify a foe?
His generous mind disdain'd so mean a fate;
That pass'd, his next endeavour was to hate.
But vainer that relief than all the rest,
The less he hoped, with more desire possess'd;
Love stood the siege, and would not yield his breast.
Change was the next, but change deceived his care;
He sought a fairer, but found none so fair.
He would have worn her out by slow degrees,
As men by fasting starve the untamed disease:
But present love required a present ease.
Looking, he feeds alone his famish'd eyes,
Feeds lingering death; but looking not, he dies.
Yet still he chose the longest way to fate,
Wasting at once his life and his estate.
His friends beheld, and pitied him in vain;
For what advice can ease a lover's pain?
Absence, the best expedient they could find,
Might save the fortune, if not cure the mind:
This means they long proposed, but little gain'd;
Yet, after much pursuit, at length obtain'd.
Hard you may think it was to give consent,
But, struggling with his own desires, he went:
With large expense, and with a pompous train
Provided, as to visit France or Spain,
Or for some distant voyage o'er the main.
But Love had clipp'd his wings, and cut him short;
Confined within the purlieus of his court:
Three miles he went, no further could retreat;
His travels ended at his country seat.



To Chassis' pleasing plains he took his way,
There pitch'd his tents, and there resolved to stay.
The spring was in the prime; the neighbouring grove
Supplied with birds, the choristers of love;
Music unbought, that minister'd delight
To morning walks, and lull'd his cares by night.
There he discharged his friends; but not the expense
Of frequent treats, and proud magnificence.
He lived as kings retire, though more at large
From public business, yet with equal charge;
With house and heart still open to receive;
As well content as love would give him leave:
He would have lived more free; but many a guest,
Who could forsake the friend, pursued the feast.
It happ'd one morning, as his fancy led,
Before his usual hour he left his bed,
To walk within a lonely lawn, that stood
On every side surrounded by the wood:
Alone he walk'd, to please his pensive mind,
And sought the deepest solitude to find:
'Twas in a grove of spreading pines he stray'd;
The winds within the quivering branches play'd,
And dancing trees a mournful music made.
The place itself was suiting to his care,
Uncouth and savage, as the cruel fair.
He wander'd on, unknowing where he went,
Lost in the wood, and all on love intent.
The day already half his race had run,
And summon'd him to due repast at noon;
But love could feel no hunger but his own.
Whilst listening to the murmuring leaves he stood,
More than a mile immersed within the wood,

At once the wind was laid; the whispering sound
Was dumb: a rising earthquake rock'd the ground!
With deeper brown the grove was overspread:
A sudden horror seized his giddy head,
And his ears tinkled, and his colour fled.
Nature was in alarm; some danger nigh
Seem'd threaten'd, though unseen to mortal eye.
Unused to fear, he summon'd all his soul,
And stood collected in himself, and whole:
Not long; for soon a whirlwind rose around,
And from afar he heard a screaming sound,
As of a dame distress'd, who cried for aid,
And fill'd with loud laments the secret shade.
A thicket close beside the grove there stood,
With briers and brambles choked, and dwarfish wood:
From thence the noise, which now approaching near,
With more distinguish'd notes invades his ear.
He raised his head, and saw a beauteous maid,
With hair dishevell'd, issuing through the shade;
Stripp'd of her clothes, and ev'n those parts reveal'd
Which modest nature keeps from sight conceal'd.
Her face, her hands, her naked limbs were torn,
With passing through the brakes and prickly thorn:
Two mastiffs gaunt and grim her flight pursued,
And oft their fasten'd fangs in blood embrued:
Oft they came up, and pinch'd her tender side.
'Mercy, O mercy, Heaven!' she ran, and cried.
When Heaven was named they loosed their hold again;
Then sprung she forth, they follow'd her amain.
Not far behind, a knight of swarthy face,
High on a coal-black steed pursued the chase;

With flashing flames his ardent eyes were fill'd,
And in his hands a naked sword he held:
He cheer'd the dogs to follow her who fled,
And vow'd revenge on her devoted head.
As Theodore was born of noble kind,
The brutal action roused his manly mind.
Moved with unworthy usage of the maid,
He, though unarm'd, resolved to give her aid.
A sapling pine he wrench'd from out the ground,
The readiest weapon that his fury found.
Thus furnish'd for offence, he cross'd the way
Betwixt the graceless villain and his prey.
The knight came thundering on, but from afar,
Thus, in imperious tone, forbad the war:
'Cease, Theodore, to proffer vain relief,
Nor stop the vengeance of so just a grief;
But give me leave to seize my destined prey,
And let eternal justice take the way!
I but revenge my fate; disdain'd, betray'd,
And suffering death for this ungrateful maid.'
He said, at once dismounting from the steed;
For now the hell-hounds, with superior speed,
Had reach'd the dame; and, fastening on her side,
The ground with issuing streams of purple dyed.
Stood Theodore surprised in deadly fright,
With chattering teeth and bristling hair upright;
Yet, arm'd with inborn worth, 'Whate'er,' said he,
'Thou art, who know'st me better than I thee,
Or prove thy rightful cause, or be defied!'
The spectre, fiercely staring, thus replied:—
'Know, Theodore, thy ancestry I claim,
And Guido Cavalcanti was my name:
One common sire our fathers did beget;
My name and story some remember yet.

Thee, when a boy, within my arms I laid,
When, for my sins, I loved this haughty maid;
Not less adored in life, nor served by me,
Than proud Honoria now is loved by thee.
What did I not her stubborn heart to gain?
But all my vows were answer'd with disdain;
She scorn'd my sorrows, and despised my pain.
Long time I dragg'd my days in fruitless care;
Then loathing life, and plunged in deep despair,
To finish my unhappy life, I fell
On this sharp sword, and now am damn'd in hell.
Short was her joy; for soon the insulting maid,
By Heaven's decree, in the cold grave was laid;
And as in unrepented sin she died,
Doom'd to the same bad place, is punish'd for her pride;
Because she deem'd I well deserved to die,
And made a merit of her cruelty.
There, then, we met; both tried, and both were cast,
And this irrevocable sentence pass'd:
That she whom I so long pursued in vain
Should suffer from my hands a lingering pain:
Renew'd to life, that she might daily die,
I daily doom'd to follow, she to fly.
No more a lover, but a mortal foe,
I seek her life (for love is none below).
As often as my dogs with better speed
Arrest her flight, is she to death decreed;
Then with this fatal sword, on which I died,
I pierce her open'd back or tender side,
And tear that harden'd heart from out her breast,
Which, with her entrails, makes my hungry hounds a feast.

Nor lies she long, but, as her fates ordain,
Springs up to life, and fresh to second pain;
Is saved to-day, to-morrow to be slain.'

This, versed in death, the infernal knight relates,
And then, for proof, fulfill'd their common fates;
Her heart and bowels through her back he drew,
And fed the hounds that help'd him to pursue.
Stern look'd the fiend, as frustrate of his will,
Not half sufficed, and greedy yet to kill.
And now the soul, expiring through the wound,
Had left the body breathless on the ground,
When thus the grisly spectre spoke again:
'Behold the fruit of ill-rewarded pain!
As many months as I sustain'd her hate,
So many years is she condemn'd by fate
To daily death; and every several place,
Conscious of her disdain and my disgrace,
Must witness her just punishment, and be
A scene of triumph and revenge to me.
As in this grove I took my last farewell,
As on this very spot of earth I fell,
As Friday saw me die, so she my prey
Becomes ev'n here on this revolving day.'

Thus, while he spoke, the virgin from the ground
Upstarted fresh, already closed the wound;
And, unconcern'd for all she felt before,
Precipitates her flight along the shore:
The hell-hounds, as ungorged with flesh and blood,
Pursue their prey, and seek their wonted food:
The fiend remounts his courser, mends his pace,
And all the vision vanish'd from the place.

Long stood the noble youth oppress'd with awe,
And stupid at the wondrous things he saw,
Surpassing common faith, transgressing nature's [law.

He would have been asleep, and wish'd to wake;
But dreams, he knew, no long impression make,
Though strong at first: if vision, to what end,
But such as must his future state portend?
His love the damsel, and himself the fiend.
But yet, reflecting that it could not be
From Heaven, which cannot impious acts decree,
Resolved within himself to shun the snare
Which hell for his destruction did prepare;
And as his better genius should direct,
From an ill cause to draw a good effect.
Inspired from Heaven, he homeward took his way,
Nor pall'd his new design with long delay:
But of his train a trusty servant sent
To call his friends together at his tent.
They came; and usual salutations paid,
With words premeditated, thus he said:
'What you have often counsell'd, to remove
My vain pursuit of unregarded love;
By thrift my sinking fortune to repair,
Though late, yet is at last become my care:
My heart shall be my own; my vast expense
Reduced to bounds by timely providence:
This only I require; invite for me
Honoria, with her father's family,
Her friends, and mine; the cause I shall display
On Friday next, for that's the appointed day.'
Well pleased were all his friends; the task was light;
The father, mother, daughter, they invite.
Hardly the dame was drawn to this repast;
But yet resolved, because it was the last.
The day was come; the guests invited came,
And, with the rest, the inexorable dame:

A feast prepared with riotous expense,
Much cost, more care, and most magnificence.
The place ordain'd was in that haunted grove
Where the revenging ghost pursued his love:
The tables in a proud pavilion spread,
With flowers below, and tissue over head:
The rest in rank; Honoria, chief in place,
Was artfully contrived to set her face
To front the thicket, and behold the chase.
The feast was served; the time so well forecast,
That, just when the dessert and fruits were placed,
The fiend's alarm began; the hollow sound
Sung in the leaves, the forest shook around,
Air blacken'd; roll'd the thunder; groan'd the ground.
Nor long before the loud laments arise
Of one distress'd, and mastiffs' mingled cries:
And first the dame came rushing through the wood,
And next the famish'd hounds that sought their food, [in blood.
And griped her flanks, and oft essay'd their jaws
Last came the felon on the sable steed,
Arm'd with his naked sword, and urged his dogs to speed.
She ran, and cried; her flight directly bent
(A guest unbidden) to the fatal tent,
The scene of death, and place ordain'd for punishment.
Loud was the noise, aghast was every guest,
The women shriek'd, the men forsook the feast;
The hounds at nearer distance hoarsely bay'd;
The hunter close pursued the visionary maid:
She rent the heaven with loud laments, imploring aid.

The gallants, to protect the lady's right,
Their falchions brandish'd at the grisly sprite:
High on his stirrups he provoked the fight;
Then on the crowd he cast a furious look,
And wither'd all their strength before he strook:
'Back, on your lives! let be,' said he, 'my prey,
And let my vengeance take the destined way.
Vain are your arms, and vainer your defence,
Against the eternal doom of Providence:
Mine is the ungrateful maid by Heaven design'd:
Mercy she would not give, nor mercy shall she find!'
At this the former tale again he told,
With thundering tone, and dreadful to behold.
Sunk were their hearts with horror of the crime,
Nor needed to be warn'd a second time,
But bore each other back: some knew the face,
And all had heard the much-lamented case
Of him who fell for love, and this the fatal place.
And now the infernal minister advanced,
Seized the due victim, and with fury lanced
Her back, and, piercing through her inmost heart,
Drew backward, as before, the offending part.
The reeking entrails next he tore away,
And to his meagre mastiffs made a prey:
The pale assistants on each other stared,
With gaping mouths for issuing words prepared;
The still-born sounds upon the palate hung,
And died imperfect on the faltering tongue.
The fright was general; but the female band
(A helpless train) in more confusion stand;
With horror shuddering, on a heap they run,
Sick at the sight of hateful justice done;
For conscience rung the alarm, and made the case
their own.

So, spread upon a lake, with upward eye
A plump of fowl behold their foe on high;
They close their trembling troop, and all attend
On whom the sousing eagle will descend.
But most the proud Honoria fear'd the event,
And thought to her alone the vision sent.
Her guilt presents to her distracted mind
Heaven's justice, Theodore's revengeful kind,
And the same fate to the same sin assign'd;
Already sees herself the monster's prey,
And feels her heart and entrails torn away.
'Twas a mute scene of sorrow, mix'd with fear.
Still on the table lay the unfinish'd cheer;
The knight and hungry mastiffs stood around,
The mangled dame lay breathless on the ground:
When on a sudden, re-inspired with breath,
Again she rose, again to suffer death;
Nor stay'd the hell-hounds, nor the hunter stay'd,
But follow'd, as before, the flying maid:
The avenger took from earth the avenging sword,
And mounting light as air, his sable steed he spurr'd:
The clouds dispell'd, the sky resumed her light,
And nature stood recover'd of her fright.
But fear, the last of ills, remain'd behind;
And horror heavy sat on every mind.
Nor Theodore encouraged more his feast,
But sternly look'd, as hatching in his breast
Some deep design; which when Honoria view'd,
The fresh impulse her former fright renew'd;
She thought herself the trembling dame who fled,
And him the grisly ghost that spurr'd the infernal steed:

The more dismay'd, for when the guests withdrew,
Their courteous host saluting all the crew,
Regardless pass'd her o'er, nor graced with kind adieu!
That sting infix'd within her haughty mind,
The downfall of her empire she divined;
And her proud heart with secret sorrow pined.
Home as they went, the sad discourse renew'd
Of the relentless dame to death pursued,
And of the sight obscene so lately view'd.
None durst arraign the righteous doom she bore;
Ev'n they who pitied most, yet blamed her more:
The parallel they needed not to name,
But in the dead they damn'd the living dame.
At every little noise she look'd behind,
For still the knight was present to her mind:
And anxious oft she started on the way,
And thought the horseman-ghost came thundering for his prey.
Return'd, she took her bed with little rest,
But in short slumbers dream'd the funeral feast:
Awaked, she turn'd her side, and slept again;
The same black vapours mounted in her brain,
And the same dreams return'd with double pain.
Now forced to wake, because afraid to sleep,
Her blood all fever'd, with a furious leap
She sprung from bed, distracted in her mind;
And fear'd, at every step, a twitching sprite behind.
Darkling and desperate, with a staggering pace,
Of death afraid, and conscious of disgrace;
Fear, pride, remorse, at once her heart assail'd;
Pride put remorse to flight, but fear prevail'd.

Friday, the fatal day, when next it came,
Her soul forethought the fiend would change his game,
And her pursue, or Theodore be slain,
And two ghosts join their packs to hunt her o'er the plain.
This dreadful image so possess'd her mind,
That, desperate any succour else to find,
She ceased all further hope; and now began
To make reflection on the unhappy man,
Rich, brave, and young, who past expression loved,
Proof to disdain, and not to be removed;
Of all the men respected and admired,
Of all the dames, except herself, desired.
Why not of her, preferr'd above the rest
By him with knightly deeds, and open love profess'd?
So had another been, where he his vows address'd.
This quell'd her pride; yet other doubts remain'd,
That, once disdaining, she might be disdain'd.
The fear was just; but greater fear prevail'd,
Fear of her life, by hellish hounds assail'd;
He took a lowering leave; but who can tell
What outward hate might inward love conceal?
Her sex's arts she knew, and why not then
Might deep dissembling have a place in men?
Here hope began to dawn; resolved to try,
She fix'd on this her utmost remedy;
Death was behind, but hard it was to die.
'Twas time enough at last on death to call,
The precipice in sight: a shrub was all
That kindly stood betwixt to break the fatal fall.
One maid she had, beloved above the rest;
Secure of her, the secret she confess'd:

And now the cheerful light her fears dispell'd,
She with no winding turns the truth conceal'd,
But put the woman off, and stood reveal'd:
With faults confess'd, commission'd her to go,
If pity yet had place, and reconcile her foe.
The welcome message made, was soon received;
'Twas what he wish'd and hoped, but scarce believed;
Fate seem'd a fair occasion to present;
He knew the sex, and fear'd she might repent,
Should he delay the moment of consent.
There yet remain'd to gain her friends (a care
The modesty of maidens well might spare);
But she with such a zeal the cause embraced
(As women, where they will, are all in haste),
That father, mother, and the kin beside,
Were overborne by fury of the tide:
With full consent of all, she changed her state,
Resistless in her love, as in her hate.
By her example warn'd, the rest beware;
More easy, less imperious, were the fair;
And that one hunting, which the devil design'd
For one fair female, lost him half the kind.



DRYDEN.

THE

FLOWER AND THE LEAF;

AND THE

WIFE OF BATH.

DRYDEN.

THE FLOWER AND THE LEAF.



They met; I, sitting at my ease, beheld
The mixt events and fortunes of the field.



DRYDEN.

THE FLOWER AND THE LEAF; OR, THE LADY IN THE ARBOUR.

Now turning from the wintry signs, the Sun
His course exalted through the Ram had run,
And whirling up the skies, his chariot drove
Through Taurus, and the lightsome realms of Love;
Where Venus from her orb descends in showers
To glad the ground, and paint the fields with flowers:
When first the tender blades of grass appear,
And buds, that yet the blast of Eurus fear,
Stand at the door of life, and doubt to clothe the [year;
Till gentle heat, and soft repeated rains,
Make the green blood to dance within their veins:
Then, at their call emboldened out they come,
And swell the gems, and burst the narrow room;
Broader and broader yet their blooms display,
Salute the welcome sun, and entertain the day:
Then from their breathing souls the sweets repair
To scent the skies, and purge the unwholesome air:
Joy spreads the heart, and with a general song
Spring issues out, and leads the jolly months along.
In that sweet season, as in bed I lay,
And sought in sleep to pass the night away,

I turn'd my weary side, but still in vain,
Though full of youthful health, and void of pain:
Cares I had none to keep me from my rest,
For love had never enter'd in my breast;
I wanted nothing Fortune could supply,
Nor did she slumber till that hour deny.
I wonder'd then, but after found it true,
Much joy had dried away the balmy dew:
Seas would be pools, without the brushing air
To curl the waves; and sure some little care
Should weary Nature so, to make her want repair.
When Chanticleer the second watch had sung,
Scorning the scorner sleep, from bed I sprung;
And dressing, by the moon, in loose array,
Pass'd out in open air, preventing day,
And sought a goodly grove, as fancy led my way.
Straight as a line in beauteous order stood,
Of oaks unshorn, a venerable wood;
Fresh was the grass beneath, and every tree
At distance planted in a due degree,
Their branching arms in air with equal space
Stretch'd to their neighbours with a long embrace:
And the new leaves on every bough were seen,
Some ruddy-colour'd, some of lighter green.
The painted birds, companions of the spring,
Hopping from spray to spray, were heard to sing;
Both eyes and ears received a like delight,
Enchanting music, and a charming sight.
On Philomel I fix'd my whole desire,
And listen'd for the queen of all the quire;
Fain would I hear her heavenly voice to sing,
And wanted yet an omen to the spring.
Attending long in vain, I took the way,
Which through a path but scarcely printed lay;
In narrow mazes oft it seem'd to meet,
And look'd as lightly press'd by fairy feet.

Wandering I walk'd alone; for still methought
To some strange end so strange a path was wrought.
At last it led me where an arbour stood,
The sacred receptacle of the wood:
This place unmark'd, though oft I walk'd the green,
In all my progress I had never seen;
And, seized at once with wonder and delight,
Gazed all around me, new to the transporting sight.
'Twas bench'd with turf; and goodly to be seen,
The thick young grass arose in fresher green:
The mound was newly made, no sight could pass
Betwixt the nice partitions of the grass,
The well united sods so closely lay;
And all around the shades defended it from day:
For sycamores with eglantine were spread,
A hedge about the sides, a covering over head.
And so the fragrant brier was wove between,
The sycamore and flowers were mix'd with green,
That Nature seem'd to vary the delight,
And satisfied at once the smell and sight.
The master workman of the bower was known
Through fairy lands, and built for Oberon;
Who twining leaves with such proportion drew,
They rose by measure, and by rule they grew:
No mortal tongue can half the beauty tell,
For none but hands divine could work so well.
Both roof and sides were like a parlour made,
A soft recess, and a cool summer shade;
The hedge was set so thick, no foreign eye
The persons placed within it could espy:
But all that pass'd without with ease was seen,
As if nor fence nor tree was placed between.
'Twas border'd with a field; and some was plain
With grass, and some was sow'd with rising grain;
That (now the dew with spangles deck'd the ground)
A sweeter spot of earth was never found.

I look'd, and look'd, and still with new delight;
Such joy my soul, such pleasures fill'd my sight:
And the fresh eglantine exhaled a breath,
Whose odours were of power to raise from death.
Nor sullen discontent, nor anxious care,
Ev'n though brought thither, could inhabit there:
But thence they fled as from their mortal foe,
For this sweet place could only pleasure know.
Thus as I mused, I cast aside my eye,
And saw a medlar-tree was planted nigh:
The spreading branches made a goodly show,
And full of opening blooms was every bough.
A goldfinch there I saw with gaudy pride
Of painted plumes, that hopp'd from side to side,
Still pecking as she pass'd; and still she drew
The sweets from every flower, and suck'd the dew.
Sufficed at length, she warbled in her throat,
And tuned her voice to many a merry note,
But indistinct, and neither sweet nor clear,
Yet such as soothed my soul, and pleased my ear.
Her short performance was no sooner tried,
When she I sought, the nightingale, replied.
So sweet, so shrill, so variously she sung,
That the grove echoed, and the valleys rung:
And I so ravish'd with her heavenly note,
I stood entranced, and had no room for thought;
But, all o'erpower'd with ecstasy of bliss,
Was in a pleasing dream of paradise.
At length I waked; and, looking round the bower,
Search'd every tree, and pried on every flower,
If any where by chance I might espy
The rural poet of the melody;
For still methought she sung not far away:
At last I found her on a laurel spray.
Close by my side she sat, and fair in sight,
Full in a line, against her opposite;

Where stood with eglantine the laurel twined;
And both their native sweets were well conjoin'd.
On the green bank I sat, and listen'd long;
(Sitting was more convenient for the song)
Nor till her lay was ended could I move,
But wish'd to dwell for ever in the grove.
Only methought the time too swiftly pass'd,
And every note I fear'd would be the last.
My sight, and smell, and hearing were employ'd,
And all three senses in full gust enjoy'd.
And what alone did all the rest surpass,
The sweet possession of the fairy place;
Single, and conscious to myself alone
Of pleasures to the excluded world unknown;
Pleasures which no where else were to be found,
And all Elysium in a spot of ground.
Thus while I sat, intent to see and hear,
And drew perfumes of more than vital air,
All suddenly I heard the approaching sound
Of vocal music on the enchanted ground:
An host of saints it seem'd, so full the quire,
As if the bless'd above did all conspire
To join their voices, and neglect the lyre.
At length there issued from the grove behind
A fair assembly of the female kind:
A train less fair, as ancient fathers tell,
Seduced the sons of Heaven to rebel.
I pass their form, and every charming grace;
Less than an angel would their worth debase;
But their attire, like liveries of a kind
All rich and rare, is fresh within my mind.
In velvet white as snow the troop was gown'd,
The seams with sparkling emeralds set around:
Their hoods and sleeves the same; and purfled o'er
With diamonds, pearls, and all the shining store
Of Eastern pomp: their long-descending train,
With rubies edged and sapphires, swept the plain:

High on their heads, with jewels richly set,
Each lady wore a radiant coronet.
Beneath the circles, all the quire was graced
With chaplets green on their fair foreheads placed;
Of laurel some, of woodbine many more;
And wreaths of agnus castus others bore.
These last, who with those virgin crowns were dress'd,
Appear'd in higher honour than the rest.
They danced around; but in the midst was seen
A lady of a more majestic mien, [queen.
By stature, and by beauty, mark'd their sovereign
She in the midst began with sober grace;
Her servants' eyes were fix'd upon her face:
And as she moved or turn'd, her motions view'd,
Her measures kept, and step by step pursued,
Methought she trod the ground with greater grace,
With more of godhead shining in her face;
And as in beauty she surpass'd the quire,
So nobler than the rest was her attire.
A crown of ruddy gold enclosed her brow,
Plain without pomp, and rich without a show:
A branch of agnus castus in her hand
She bore aloft, her sceptre of command!
Admired, adored, by all the circling crowd;
For wheresoe'er she turn'd her face, they bow'd:
And as she danced, a roundelay she sung
In honour of the laurel, ever young:
She raised her voice on high, and sung so clear,
The fawns came scudding from the groves to hear,
And all the bending forest lent an ear.
At every close she made, the attending throng
Replied, and bore the burthen of the song;
So just, so small, yet in so sweet a note,
It seem'd the music melted in the throat.
Thus dancing on, and singing as they danced,
They to the middle of the mead advanced.

Till round my arbour a new ring they made,
And footed it about the secret shade.
O'erjoy'd to see the jolly troop so near,
But somewhat awed, I shook with holy fear;
Yet not so much, but that I noted well
Who did the most in song or dance excel.
Not long I had observed, when from afar
I heard a sudden symphony of war;
The neighing coursers and the soldiers' cry,
And sounding trumps that seem'd to tear the sky:
I saw soon after this, behind the grove
From whence the ladies did in order move,
Come issuing out in arms a warrior train,
That like a deluge pour'd upon the plain.
On barbed steeds they rode in proud array,
Thick as the college of the bees in May,
When swarming o'er the dusky fields they fly,
New to the flowers, and intercept the sky.
So fierce they drove, their coursers were so fleet,
That the turf trembled underneath their feet.
To tell their costly furniture were long,
The summer's day would end before the song;
To purchase but the tenth of all their store,
Would make the mighty Persian monarch poor:
Yet what I can I will. Before the rest
The trumpets issued in white mantles dress'd,
A numerous troop, and all their heads around
With chaplets green of cerrial oak were crown'd;
And at each trumpet was a banner bound,
Which, waving in the wind, display'd at large
Their master's coat of arms and knightly charge.
Broad were the banners, and of snowy hue;
A purer web the silkworm never drew.
The chief about their necks the scutcheons wore,
With orient pearls and jewels powder'd o'er:
Broad were their collars too, and every one
Was set about with many a costly stone.

Next these, of kings-at-arms a goodly train,
In proud array, came prancing o'er the plain:
Their cloaks were cloth of silver mix'd with gold,
And garlands green around their temples roll'd.
Rich crowns were on their royal scutcheons placed,
With sapphires, diamonds, and with rubies graced.
And as the trumpets their appearance made,
So these in habits were alike array'd,
But with a pace more sober, and more slow;
And twenty, rank in rank, they rode a-row.
The pursuivants came next, in number more;
And, like the heralds, each his scutcheon bore:
Clad in white velvet all their troop they led,
With each an oaken chaplet on his head.
Nine royal knights in equal rank succeed,
Each warrior mounted on a fiery steed:
In golden armour glorious to behold;
The rivets of their arms were nail'd with gold.
Their surcoats of white ermine-fur were made;
With cloth of gold between, that cast a glittering shade.
The trappings of their steeds were of the same;
The golden fringe ev'n set the ground on flame,
And drew a precious trail: a crown divine
Of laurel did about their temples twine.
Three henchmen were for every knight assign'd,
All in rich livery clad, and of a kind:
White velvet, but unshorn, for cloaks they wore,
And each within his hand a truncheon bore:
The foremost held a helm of rare device,
A prince's ransom would not pay the price:
The second bore the buckler of his knight;
The third, of cornel-wood, a spear upright,
Headed with piercing steel, and polish'd bright.
Like to their lords their equipage was seen,
And all their foreheads crown'd with garlands green.

And, after these, came arm'd with spear and shield,
A host so great, as cover'd all the field;
And all their foreheads, like the knights before,
With laurels ever green were shaded o'er,
Or oak, or other leaves of lasting kind,
Tenacious of the stem, and firm against the wind.
Some in their hands, beside the lance and shield,
The boughs of woodbine or of hawthorn held,
Or branches for their mystic emblems took
Of palm, of laurel, or of cerrial oak.
Thus marching to the trumpet's lofty sound,
Drawn in two lines adverse they wheel'd around,
And in the middle meadow took their ground.
Among themselves the tourney they divide,
In equal squadrons, ranged on either side.
Then turn'd their horses' heads, and man to man,
And steed to steed opposed, the justs began.
They lightly set their lances in the rest,
And, at the sign, against each other press'd.
They met; I, sitting at my ease, beheld
The mix'd events and fortunes of the field. [man,
Some broke their spears, some tumbled horse and
And round the fields the lighten'd coursers ran
An hour and more: like tides, in equal sway
They rush'd, and won by turns and lost the day.
At length the nine (who still together held)
Their fainting foes to shameful flight compell'd,
And with resistless force o'erran the field.
Thus, to their fame, when finish'd was the fight,
The victors from their lofty steeds alight:
Like them dismounted all the warlike train,
And two by two proceeded o'er the plain;
Till to the fair assembly they advanced,
Who, near the secret arbour, sang and danced.
The ladies left their measures at the sight,
To meet the chiefs returning from the fight, [knight.
And each, with open arms, embraced her chosen

Amid the plain a spreading laurel stood,
The grace and ornament of all the wood:
That pleasing shade they sought, a soft retreat
From sudden April showers, a shelter from the heat.
Her leafy arms with such extent were spread,
So near the clouds was her aspiring head,
That hosts of birds that wing the liquid air,
Perch'd in the boughs, had nightly lodging there;
And flocks of sheep beneath the shade from far
Might hear the rattling hail, and wintry war;
From heaven's inclemency here found retreat,
Enjoy'd the cool, and shunn'd the scorching heat:
A hundred knights might there at ease abide,
And every knight a lady by his side:
The trunk itself such odours did bequeathe,
That a Moluccan breeze to these was common breath.
The lords and ladies here, approaching, paid
Their homage, with a low obeisance made,
And seem'd to venerate the sacred shade.
These rites perform'd, their pleasures they pursue,
With songs of love, and mix with measures new;
Around the holy tree their dance they frame,
And every champion leads his chosen dame.
I cast my sight upon the farther field,
And a fresh object of delight beheld:
For, from the region of the west, I heard
New music sound, and a new troop appear'd
Of knights and ladies mix'd, a jolly band;
But all on foot they march'd, and hand in hand.
The ladies dress'd in rich simars were seen
Of Florence satin, flower'd with white and green,
And for a shade betwixt the bloomy gridelin.
The borders of their petticoats below
Were guarded thick with rubies on a row;
And every damsel wore upon her head
Of flowers a garland, blended white and red.

Attired in mantles all the knights were seen,
That gratified the view with cheerful green:
Their chaplets of their ladies' colours were, [hair.
Composed of white and red, to shade their shining
Before the merry troop the minstrels play'd;
All in their master's liveries were array'd,
And clad in green; and on their temples wore
The chaplets white and red their ladies bore.
Their instruments were various in their kind:
Some for the bow, and some for breathing wind:
The psaltery, pipe, and hautboy's noisy band,
And the soft lute trembling beneath the touching
A tuft of daisies on a flowery lay [hand.
They saw, and thitherward they bent their way:
To this both knights and dames their homage made,
And due obeisance to the daisy paid.
And then the band of flutes began to play,
To which a lady sung a virelay;
And still at every close she would repeat
The burthen of the song, 'The daisy is so sweet.'
'The daisy is so sweet,' when she begun,
The troop of knights and dames continued on.
The concert and the voice so charm'd my ear,
And soothed my soul, that it was heaven to hear.
But soon their pleasure pass'd: at noon of day
The sun with sultry beams began to play:
Not Sirius shoots a fiercer flame from high,
When with his poisonous breath he blasts the sky:
Then droop'd the fading flowers (their beauty fled)
And closed their sickly eyes, and hung the head;
And, rivell'd up with heat, lay dying in their bed.
The ladies gasp'd, and scarcely could respire;
The breath they drew, no longer air, but fire;
The fainty knights were scorch'd, and knew not where
To run for shelter, for no shade was near.

And after this the gathering clouds amain
Pour'd down a storm of rattling hail and rain,
And lightning flash'd betwixt: the field and flowers,
Burnt up before, were buried in the showers.
The ladies and the knights, no shelter nigh,
Bare to the weather and the wintry sky,
Were dropping wet, disconsolate and wan,
And through their thin array received the rain:
While those in white, protected by the tree,
Saw pass the vain assault, and stood from danger free.
But as compassion moved their gentle minds,
When ceased the storm, and silent were the winds,
Displeased at what, not suffering, they had seen,
They went to cheer the faction of the green.
The queen in white array before her band,
Saluting, took her rival by the hand;
So did the knights and dames, with courtly grace,
And with behaviour sweet their foes embrace.
Then thus the queen with laurel on her brow:
'Fair sister, I have suffer'd in your woe,
Nor shall be wanting aught within my power
For your relief in my refreshing bower.'
That other answer'd with a lowly look,
And soon the gracious invitation took;
For ill at ease both she and all her train
The scorching sun had borne, and beating rain.
Like courtesy was used by all in white, [knight.
Each dame a dame received, and every knight a
The laurel-champions with their swords invade
The neighbouring forests where the justs were made,
And sere wood from the rotten hedges took,
And seeds of latent fire from flints provoke.
A cheerful blaze arose, and by the fire [attire.
They warm'd their frozen feet, and dried their wet
Refresh'd with heat, the ladies sought around
For virtuous herbs, which gather'd from the ground,

They squeezed the juice, and cooling ointment made,
Which on their sun-burnt cheeks and their chapp'd [skins they laid;
Then sought green salads, which they bade them eat,
A sovereign remedy for inward heat.
The lady of the leaf ordain'd a feast,
And made the lady of the flower her guest:
When, lo! a bower ascended on the plain,
With sudden seats adorn'd, and large for either train.
This bower was near my pleasant arbour placed,
That I could hear and see whatever pass'd.
The ladies sate, with each a knight between,
Distinguish'd by their colours, white and green:
The vanquish'd party with the victors join'd,
Nor wanted sweet discourse—the banquet of the mind.
Meantime, the minstrels play'd on either side,
Vain in their art, and for the mastery vied:
The sweet contention lasted for an hour,
And reach'd my secret arbour from the bower.
The sun was set; and Vesper, to supply
His absent beam, had lighted up the sky;
When Philomel, officious all the day
To sing the service of the ensuing May,
Fled from her laurel-shade, and wing'd her flight
Directly to the queen array'd in white;
And hopping, sate familiar on her hand,
A new musician, and increased the band.
The goldfinch, who, to shun the scalding heat,
Had changed the medlar for a safer seat,
And, hid in bushes, 'scaped the bitter shower,
Now perch'd upon the lady of the flower;
And either songster, holding out their throats,
And folding up their wings, renew'd their notes,
As if all day, preluding to the fight,
They only had rehearsed, to sing by night.

The banquet ended, and the battle done,
They danced by starlight and the friendly moon:
And when they were to part, the laureate queen
Supplied with steeds the lady of the green,
Her and her train conducting on the way,
The moon to follow, and avoid the day.
This when I saw, inquisitive to know
The secret moral of the mystic show,
I started from my shade, in hopes to find
Some nymph to satisfy my longing mind;
And as my fair adventure fell, I found
A lady all in white with laurel crown'd,
Who closed the rear, and softly paced along,
Repeating to herself the former song.
With due respect my body I inclined,
As to some being of superior kind,
And made my court, according to the day,
Wishing her queen and her a happy May.
'Great thanks, my daughter,' with a gracious bow,
She said; and I, who much desired to know
Of whence she was, yet fearful how to break
My mind, adventured humbly thus to speak:
'Madam, might I presume, and not offend?
So may the stars and shining moon attend
Your nightly sports, as you vouchsafe to tell
What nymphs they were who mortal forms excel,
And what the knights who fought in listed fields so well.'
To this the dame replied, 'Fair daughter, know
That what you saw was all a fairy show;
And all those airy shapes you now behold [mould:
Were human bodies once, and clothed with earthly
Our souls, not yet prepared for upper light,
Till doomsday wander in the shades of night.
This only holiday of all the year
We privileged in sunshine may appear;

With songs and dance we celebrate the day,
And with due honours usher in the May.
At other times we reign by night alone,
And, posting through the skies, pursue the moon:
But when the morn arises none are found,
For cruel Demogorgon walks the round;
And, if he finds a fairy lag in light,
He drives the wretch before, and lashes into night.
'All courteous are by kind, and ever proud
With friendly offices to help the good.
In every land we have a larger space
Than what is known to you of mortal race,
Where we with green adorn our fairy bowers;
And ev'n this grove, unseen before, is ours.
Know further, every lady clothed in white,
And, crown'd with oak and laurel, every knight,
Are servants to the Leaf, by liveries known
Of innocence, and I myself am one!
Saw you not her, so graceful to behold,
In white attire, and crown'd with radiant gold?
The sovereign lady of our land is she,
Diana call'd, the queen of chastity;
And, for the spotless name of maid she bears,
That agnus castus in her hand appears:
And all her train, with leafy chaplets crown'd,
Were for unblamed virginity renown'd;
But those the chief and highest in command
Who bear those holy branches in their hand.
The knights adorn'd with laurel-crowns are they
Whom death nor danger ever could dismay;
Victorious names, who made the world obey;
Who, while they lived, in deeds of arms excell'd,
And after death for deities were held.
But those who wear the woodbine on their brow
Were knights of love, who never broke their vow:

Firm to their plighted faith, and ever free
From fears, and fickle chance, and jealousy.
The lords and ladies who the woodbine bear,
As true as Tristram and Isotta were.'
'But what are those,' said I, 'the unconquer'd nine, [shine?
Who, crown'd with laurel-wreaths, in golden armour
And who the knights in green, and what the train
Of ladies dress'd with daisies on the plain?
Why both the bands in worship disagree,
And some adore the flower, and some the tree?'
'Just is your suit, fair daughter,' said the dame:
'Those laurell'd chiefs were men of mighty fame;
Nine worthies were they call'd, of different rites,
Three Jews, three Pagans, and three Christian knights.
These, as you see, ride foremost in the field,
As they the foremost rank of honour held,
And all in deeds of chivalry excell'd;
Their temples wreathed with leaves that still renew;
For deathless laurel is the victor's due.
Who bear the bows were knights in Arthur's reign;
Twelve they, and twelve the peers of Charlemagne:
For bows the strength of brawny arms imply,
Emblems of valour and of victory.
Behold an order yet of newer date,
Doubling their number, equal in their state;
Our England's ornament, the crown's defence,
In battle brave protectors of their prince;
Unchanged by fortune, to their sovereign true,
For which their manly legs are bound with blue.
These, of the Garter call'd, of faith unstain'd,
In fighting fields the laurel have obtain'd,
And well repaid those honours which they gain'd.
The laurel-wreaths were first by Cæsar worn,
And still they Cæsar's successors adorn:

One leaf of this is immortality,
And more of worth than all the world can buy.'
'One doubt remains,' said I; 'the dames in green,
What were their qualities, and who their queen?'
'Flora commands,' said she, 'those nymphs and knights,
Who lived in slothful ease and loose delights;
Who never acts of honour durst pursue,
The men inglorious knights, the ladies all untrue;
Who, nursed in idleness, and train'd in courts,
Pass'd all their precious hours in plays and sports,
Till death behind came stalking on unseen,
And wither'd, like the storm, the freshness of their green.
These, and their mates, enjoy the present hour,
And therefore pay their homage to the Flower.
But knights in knightly deeds should persevere,
And still continue what at first they were—
Continue and proceed in honour's fair career:
No room for cowardice or dull delay,
From good to better they should urge their way.
For this with golden spurs the chiefs are graced,
With pointed rowels arm'd to mend their haste;
For this with lasting leaves their brows are bound,
For laurel is the sign of labour crown'd, [ground:
Which bears the bitter blast, nor, shaken, falls to
From winter winds it suffers no decay,
For ever fresh and fair, and every month is May.
Ev'n when the vital sap retreats below,
Ev'n when the hoary head is hid in snow,
The life is in the leaf; and still between
The fits of falling snows appears the streaky green.
Not so the flower, which lasts for little space,
A short-lived good, and an uncertain grace:
This way and that the feeble stem is driven,
Weak to sustain the storms and injuries of heaven.

Propp'd by the spring, it lifts aloft the head,
But of a sickly beauty, soon to shed;
In summer living, and in winter dead:
For things of tender kind, for pleasure made,
Shoot up with swift increase, and sudden are decay'd.'

With humble words, the wisest I could frame,
And proffer'd service, I repaid the dame;
That, of her grace, she gave her maid to know
The secret meaning of this moral show.
And she, to prove what profit I had made
Of mystic truth, in fables first convey'd,
Demanded, till the next returning May,
Whether the leaf or flower I would obey?
I chose the leaf: she smiled with sober cheer,
And wish'd me fair adventure for the year;
And gave me charms and sigils, for defence
Against ill tongues that scandal innocence:
'But I,' said she, 'my fellows must pursue,
Already past the plain and out of view.'

We parted thus: I homeward sped my way,
Bewilder'd in the wood till dawn of day,
And met the merry crew who danced about the May:
Then late, refresh'd with sleep, I rose to write
The visionary vigils of the night.
Blush, as thou mayst, my little book, for shame!
Nor hope with homely verse to purchase fame;
For such thy maker chose, and so design'd
Thy simple style to suit thy lowly kind.

THE WIFE OF BATH.

In days of old, when Arthur fill'd the throne,
Whose acts and fame to foreign lands were blown,
The king of elves and little fairy-queen
Gamboll'd on heaths, and danced on every green;
And where the jolly troop had led the round,
The grass unbidden rose, and mark'd the ground:
Nor darkling did they dance; the silver light
Of Phœbe served to guide their steps aright,
And, with their tripping pleased, prolong'd the night.
Her beams they follow'd, where at full she play'd,
Nor longer than she shed her horns they stay'd;
From thence with airy flight to foreign lands convey'd.
Above the rest, our Britain held they dear;
More solemnly they kept their sabbaths here,
And made more spacious rings, and revell'd half the year.
I speak of ancient times; for now the swain
Returning late may pass the woods in vain,
And never hope to see the nightly train:
In vain the dairy now with mints is dress'd,
The dairy-maid expects no fairy guest
To skim the bowls, and after pay the feast.
She sighs, and shakes her empty shoes in vain,
No silver-penny to reward her pain:
For priests, with prayers and other godly gear,
Have made the merry goblins disapppear;
And where they play'd their merry pranks before
Have sprinkled holy water on the floor.

And friars, that through the wealthy regions run
Thick as the motes that twinkle in the sun,
Resort to farmers rich, and bless their halls,
And exorcise the beds, and cross the walls.
This makes the fairy-quires forsake the place,
When once 'tis hallow'd with the rites of grace:
But in the walks where wicked elves have been
The learning of the parish now is seen,
The midnight parson posting o'er the green,
With gown tuck'd up, to wakes; for Sunday next,
With humming ale encouraging his text;
Nor wants the holy leer to country girl betwixt.
From fiends and imps he sets the village free;
There haunts not any incubus but he.
The maids and women need no danger fear
To walk by night, and sanctity so near;
For by some haycock, or some shady thorn,
He tells his beads both even-song and morn.
It so befel in this King Arthur's reign,
A lusty knight was pricking o'er the plain;
A bachelor he was, and of the courtly train.
It happen'd as he rode, a damsel gay
In russet robes to market took her way:
Soon on the girl he cast an amorous eye,
So straight she walk'd, and on her pasterns high:
If seeing her behind he liked her pace,
Now turning short he better liked her face.
He lights in haste, and, full of youthful fire,
By force accomplish'd his obscene desire.
This done, away he rode, not unespied,
For swarming at his back the country cried;
And, once in view, they never lost the sight,
But seized, and pinion'd brought to court the knight.

Then courts of kings were held in high renown,
Ere made the common brothels of the town;

There virgins honourable vows received,
But chaste as maids in monasteries lived.
The king himself, to nuptial ties a slave,
No bad example to his poets gave;
And they, not bad but in a vicious age,
Had not, to please the prince, debauch'd the stage.
Now what should Arthur do? he loved the knight;
But sovereign monarchs are the source of right!
Moved by the damsel's tears, and common cry,
He doom'd the brutal ravisher—to die.
But fair Geneura rose in his defence,
And pray'd so hard for mercy from the prince,
That to his queen the king the offender gave,
And left it in her power to kill or save.
This gracious act the ladies all approve,
Who thought it much a man should die for love;
And with their mistress join'd in close debate
(Covering their kindness with dissembled hate),
If not to free him, to prolong his fate.
At last agreed, they call'd him by consent
Before the queen and female parliament;
And the fair speaker, rising from her chair,
Did thus the judgment of the house declare.
'Sir knight, though I have ask'd thy life, yet still
Thy destiny depends upon my will;
Nor hast thou other surety than the grace
Not due to thee from our offended race.
But as our kind is of a softer mould,
And cannot blood without a sigh behold,
I grant thee life, reserving still the power
To take the forfeit when I see my hour,
Unless thy answer to my next demand
Shall set thee free from our avenging hand.
The question whose solution I require
Is, "What the sex of women most desire?"

In this dispute thy judges are at strife:
Beware, for on thy wit depends thy life.
Yet, lest surprised, unknowing what to say,
Thou damn thyself, we give thee further day:
A year is thine, to wander at thy will;
And learn from others, if thou want'st the skill.
But, not to hold our proffer turn'd in scorn,
Good sureties will we have for thy return;
That at the time prefix'd thou shalt obey,
And at thy pledges' peril keep thy day.'
Woe was the knight at this severe command,
But well he knew 'twas bootless to withstand:
The terms accepted as the fair ordain,
He put in bail for his return again,
And promised answer at the day assign'd,
The best, with Heaven's assistance, he could find.
His leave thus taken, on his way he went,
With heavy heart, and full of discontent;
Misdoubting much, and fearful of the event.
'Twas hard the truth of such a point to find
As was not yet agreed among the kind.
Thus on he went, still anxious more and more,
Ask'd all he met, and knock'd at every door;
Inquired of men; but made his chief request
To learn from women what they loved the best.
They answer'd each according to her mind
To please herself, not all the female kind.
One was for wealth, another was for place;
Crones, old and ugly, wish'd a better face:
The widow's wish was oftentimes to wed;
The wanton maids were all for sport a-bed;
Some said the sex were pleased with handsome lies,
And some gross flattery loved without disguise.
'Truth is,' says one, 'he seldom fails to win
Who flatters well, for that 's our darling sin:

But long attendance, and a duteous mind,
Will work ev'n with the wisest of the kind.'
One thought the sex's prime felicity
Was from the bonds of wedlock to be free:
Their pleasures, hours, and actions all their own,
And uncontroll'd to give account to none.
Some wish a husband-fool; but such are cursed,
For fools perverse of husbands are the worst:
All women would be counted chaste and wise,
Nor should our spouses see but with our eyes;
For fools will prate, and, though they want the wit
To find close faults, yet open blots will hit;
Though better for their ease to hold their tongue,
For woman-kind was never in the wrong.
So noise ensues, and quarrels last for life;
The wife abhors the fool, the fool the wife.
And some men say that great delight have we,
To be for truth extoll'd and secresy;
And constant in one purpose still to dwell,
And not our husband's counsel to reveal.
But that 's a fable; for our sex is frail,
Inventing rather than not tell a tale:
Like leaky sieves, no secrets we can hold,
Witness the famous tale that Ovid told.
'Midas the king, as in his book appears,
By Phœbus was endow'd with ass's ears,
Which under his long locks he well conceal'd,
As monarchs' vices must not be reveal'd,
For fear the people have them in the wind,
Who long ago were neither dumb nor blind,
Nor apt to think from heaven their title springs,
Since Jove and Mars left off begetting kings.
This Midas knew; and durst communicate
To none but to his wife his ears of state:
One must be trusted, and he thought her fit,
As passing prudent, and a parlous wit.

To this sagacious confessor he went,
And told her what a gift the gods had sent;
But told it under matrimonial seal,
With strict injunction never to reveal.
The secret heard, she plighted him her troth
(And sacred, sure, is every woman's oath),
The royal malady should rest unknown,
Both for her husband's honour and her own;
But ne'ertheless she pined with discontent,
The counsel rumbled till it found a vent.
The thing she knew she was obliged to hide;
By interest and by oath the wife was tied;
But, if she told it not, the woman died.
Loth to betray a husband and a prince,
But she must burst, or blab: and no pretence
Of honour tied her tongue from self-defence.
A marshy ground commodiously was near:
Thither she ran, and held her breath for fear,
Lest, if a word she spoke of any thing,
That word might be the secret of the king.
Thus full of counsel to the fen she went,
Griped all the way, and longing for a vent.
Arrived, by pure necessity compell'd,
On her majestic marrowbones she kneel'd;
Then to the water's brink she laid her head,
And, as a bittern bumps within a reed,
"To thee alone, O lake!" she said, "I tell,
And, as thy queen, command thee to conceal,
Beneath his lock the king my husband wears
A goodly royal pair of ass's ears!"
Now I have eased my bosom of the pain
Till the next longing fit return again.'

Thus through a woman was the secret known:
Tell us, and in effect you tell the town.
But to my tale:—The knight, in heavy cheer,
Wandering in vain, had now consumed the year;

One day was only left to solve the doubt,
Yet knew no more than when he first set out.
But home he must, and, as the award had been,
Yield up his body captive to the queen.
In this despairing state he happ'd to ride,
As fortune led him, by a forest side:
Lonely the vale, and full of horror stood,
Brown with the shade of a religious wood;
When full before him at the noon of night
(The moon was up and shot a gleamy light)
He saw a quire of ladies in a round,
That, featly footing, seem'd to skim the ground:
Thus, dancing hand in hand, so light they were,
He knew not where they trod, on earth or air.
At speed he drove, and came a sudden guest,
In hope, where many women were, at least
Some one by chance might answer his request;
But faster than his horse the ladies flew,
And in a trice were vanish'd out of view.
One only hag remain'd, but fouler far
Than grandame apes in Indian forests are:
Against a wither'd oak she lean'd her weight,
Propp'd on her trusty staff, not half upright,
And dropp'd an awkward curtsy to the knight;
Then said, 'What makes you, sir, so late abroad
Without a guide, and this no beaten road?
Or want you aught that here you hope to find,
Or travel for some trouble in your mind?
The last I guess; and, if I read aright,
Those of our sex are bound to serve a knight:
Perhaps good counsel may your grief assuage;
Then tell your pain, for wisdom is in age.' [know
To this the knight: 'Good mother, would you
The secret cause and spring of all my woe?
My life must with to-morrow's light expire,
Unless I tell what women most desire:

Now could you help me at this hard essay,
Or for your inborn goodness, or for pay;
Yours is my life, redeem'd by your advice:
Ask what you please, and I will pay the price.'
'Plight me thy faith,' quoth she, 'that what I ask,
Thy danger over and perform'd the task,
That shalt thou give for hire of thy demand,
Here take thy oath, and seal it on my hand;
I warrant thee, on peril of my life,
Thy word shall please both widow, maid, and wife:
The proudest kerchief of the court shall rest
Well satisfied of what they love the best.'
More words there needed not, to move the knight
To take her offer, and his truth to plight.
With that she spread her mantle on the ground,
And, first inquiring whither he was bound,
Bade him not fear, though long and rough the way,
At court he should arrive ere break of day:
His horse should find the way without a guide,
She said: with fury they began to ride;
He on the midst, the beldam at the side.
The horse what devil drove, I cannot tell,
But only this, they sped their journey well:
And all the way the crone inform'd the knight,
How he should answer the demand aright.
To court they came: the news was quickly spread
Of his returning to redeem his head.
The female senate was assembled soon,
With all the mob of women in the town:
The queen sat lord-chief-justice of the hall,
And bade the crier cite the criminal.
The knight appear'd, and silence they proclaim;
Then first the culprit answer'd to his name;
And after forms of law, was last required
To name the thing that women most desired.

The offender, taught his lesson by the way,
And by his counsel order'd what to say,
Thus bold began: 'My lady liege,' said he,
'What all your sex desire is sovereignty!
The wife affects her husband to command;
All must be her's, both money, house, and land.
The maids are mistresses ev'n in their name;
And of their servants full dominion claim.
This, at the peril of my head, I say,—
A blunt, plain truth,—the sex aspires to sway;
You, to rule all; while we, like slaves, obey.'
There was not one, or widow, maid, or wife,
But said the knight had well deserved his life.
Ev'n fair Geneura, with a blush, confess'd
The man had found what women love the best.
Up starts the beldam, who was there unseen,
And, reverence made, accosted thus the queen:
'My liege,' said she, 'before the court arise,
May I, poor wretch, find favour in your eyes,
To grant my just request? 'twas I who taught
The knight this answer, and inspired his thought.
None but a woman could a man direct
To tell us women what we most affect.
But first I swore him on his knightly troth,
(And here demand performance of his oath)
To grant the boon that next I should desire;
He gave his faith, and I expect my hire:
My promise is fulfill'd: I saved his life,
And claim his debt,—to take me for his wife.'
The knight was ask'd, nor could his oath deny,
But hoped they would not force him to comply.
The women, who would rather wrest the laws,
Than let a sister-plaintiff lose the cause,
(As judges on the bench more gracious are,
And more attent to brothers of the bar)

Cried, one and all, the suppliant should have right,
And to the grandame-hag adjudged the knight.
In vain he sigh'd, and oft with tears desired
Some reasonable suit might be required;
But still the crone was constant to her note;
The more he spoke, the more she stretch'd her throat:
In vain he proffer'd all his goods, to save
His body, destined to that living grave.
The liquorish hag rejects the pelf with scorn,
And nothing but the man would serve her turn.
'Nor all the wealth of Eastern kings,' said she,
'Hath power to part my plighted love and me:
And, old and ugly as I am, and poor,
Yet never will I break the faith I swore;
For mine thou art by promise during life,
And I, thy loving and obedient wife.'
'My love! nay, rather my damnation thou,'
Said he; 'nor am I bound to keep my vow:
The fiend, thy sire, has sent thee from below,
Else how couldst thou my secret sorrows know?
Avaunt, old witch! for I renounce thy bed:
The queen may take the forfeit of my head,
Ere any of my race so foul a crone shall wed!'
Both heard, the judge pronounced against the knight;
So was he married in his own despite;
And all day after hid him as an owl,
Not able to sustain a sight so foul.
Perhaps the reader thinks I do him wrong,
To pass the marriage-feast, and nuptial song:
Mirth there was none, the man was *a-la-mort*,
And little courage had to make his court.
To bed they went, the bridegroom and the bride:
Was never such an ill-pair'd couple tied.

Restless he toss'd and tumbled to and fro,
And roll'd, and wriggled farther off, for woe.
The good old wife lay smiling by his side,
And caught him in her quivering arms, and cried,
'When you my ravish'd predecessor saw,
You were not then become this man of straw;
Had you been such, you might have 'scaped the law.
Is this the custom of king Arthur's court?
Are all round-table knights of such a sort?
Remember I am she who saved your life,
Your loving, lawful, and complying wife.
Not thus you swore in your unhappy hour,
Nor I for this return employ'd my power.
In time of need I was your faithful friend;
Nor did I since, nor ever will, offend.
Believe me, my loved lord, 'tis much unkind;
What fury has possess'd your alter'd mind?
Thus on my wedding-night—without pretence—
Come, turn this way, or tell me my offence.
If not your wife, let Reason's rule persuade;
Name but my fault, amends shall soon be made.'
'Amends! nay, that 's impossible,' said he;
'What change of age or ugliness can be?
Or, could Medea's magic mend thy face,
Thou art descended from so mean a race,
That never knight was match'd with such disgrace.
What wonder, madam, if I move my side,
When, if I turn, I turn to such a bride?'
'And is this all that troubles you so sore?'
'And what the devil couldst thou wish me more?'
'Ah, benedicite!' replied the crone,
'Then cause of just complaining have you none.
The remedy to this were soon applied,
Would you be like the bridegroom to the bride.
But, for you say a long-descended race,
And wealth, and dignity, and power, and place,

Make gentlemen; and that your high degree
Is much disparaged to be match'd with me;
Know this, my lord, nobility of blood
Is but a glittering and fallacious good:
The nobleman is he whose noble mind
Is fill'd with inborn worth, unborrow'd from his kind.
The King of Heaven was in a manger laid;
And took his earth but from an humble maid:
Then what can birth or mortal men bestow,
Since floods no higher than their fountains flow?
We, who for name and empty honour strive,
Our true nobility from him derive.
Your ancestors, who puff your mind with pride,
And vast estates to mighty titles tied,
Did not your honour, but their own, advance;
For virtue comes not by inheritance.
If you tralineate from your father's mind,
What are you else but of a bastard kind?
Do as your great progenitors have done,
And by their virtues prove yourself their son.
No father can infuse or wit or grace;
A mother comes across, and mars the race:
A grandsire or a grandame taints the blood,
And seldom three descents continue good.
Were virtue by descent, a noble name
Could never villanize his father's fame:
But, as the first, the last of all the line
Would, like the sun, ev'n in descending, shine;
Take fire, and bear it to the darkest house,
Betwixt king Arthur's court and Caucasus;
If you depart, the flame shall still remain,
And the bright blaze enlighten all the plain;
Nor, till the fuel perish, can decay,
By Nature form'd on things combustible to prey.
Such is not man, who, mixing better seed
With worse, begets a base, degenerate breed:

The bad corrupts the good, and leaves behind
No trace of all the great begetter's mind.
The father sinks within his son, we see,
And often rises in the third degree,
If better luck a better mother give:
Chance gave us being, and by chance we live.
Such as our atoms were, ev'n such are we,
Or call it chance or strong necessity;
Thus, loaded with dead weight, the will is free.
And thus it needs must be: for seed conjoin'd
Lets into Nature's work the imperfect kind:
But fire, the enlivener of the general frame,
Is one, its operation still the same.
Its principle is in itself; while ours
Works, as confederates war, with mingled powers,
Or man, or woman, whichsoever fails;
And oft the vigour of the worse prevails.
Ether with sulphur blended alters hue,
And casts a dusky gleam of Sodom blue.
Thus in a brute their ancient honour ends,
And the fair mermaid in the fish descends:
The line is gone—no longer duke or earl,
But, by himself degraded, turns a churl.
Nobility of blood is but renown
Of thy great fathers, by their virtue known,
And a long trail of light to thee descending down:
If in thy smoke it ends, their glories shine;
But infamy and villanage are thine.
Then what I said before is plainly show'd,
The true nobility proceeds from God:
Not left us by inheritance, but given
By bounty of our stars, and grace of Heaven.
Thus from a captive Servius Tullus rose,
Whom for his virtues the first Romans chose:
Fabricius from their walls repell'd the foe,
Whose noble hands had exercised the plough.

From hence, my lord and love, I thus conclude,
That though my homely ancestors were rude,
Mean as I am, yet I may have the grace
To make you father of a generous race:
And noble then am I, when I begin,
In virtue clothed, to cast the rags of sin.
If poverty be my upbraided crime,
And you believe in Heaven, there was a time
When He, the great controller of our fate,
Deign'd to be man, and lived in low estate;
Which He who had the world at his dispose,
If poverty were vice, had never chose.
Philosophers have said, and poets sing,
That a glad poverty 's an honest thing:
Content is wealth, the riches of the mind,
And happy he who can that treasure find:
But the base miser starves amidst his store,
Broods on his gold, and griping still at more,
Sits sadly pining, and believes he 's poor.
The ragged beggar, though he wants relief,
Has not to lose, and sings before the thief.
Want is a bitter and a hateful good,
Because its virtues are not understood:
Yet many things, impossible to thought,
Have been by need to full perfection brought:
The daring of the soul proceeds from thence,
Sharpness of wit, and active diligence:
Prudence at once, and fortitude it gives,
And, if in patience taken, mends our lives:
For ev'n that indigence that brings me low,
Makes me myself, and Him above, to know;
A good which none would challenge, few would choose,
A fair possession, which mankind refuse.
'If we from wealth to poverty descend,
Want gives to know the flatterer from the friend.

If I am old and ugly, well for you;
No lewd adulterer will my love pursue;
Nor jealousy, the bane of married life,
Shall haunt you for a wither'd homely wife:
For age and ugliness, as all agree,
Are the best guards of female chastity.
'Yet since I see your mind is worldly bent,
I'll do my best to further your content:
And, therefore, of two gifts in my dispose,
Think, ere you speak, I grant you leave to choose:
Would you I should be still deform'd and old,
Nauseous to touch, and loathsome to behold;
On this condition, to remain for life,
A careful, tender, and obedient wife,
In all I can contribute to your ease,
And not in deed, or word, or thought, displease?
Or would you rather have me young and fair,
And take the chance that happens to your share?
Temptations are in beauty and in youth,
And how can you depend upon my truth?
Now weigh the danger with the doubtful bliss,
And thank yourself, if aught should fall amiss.'
Sore sigh'd the knight, who this long sermon heard:
At length, considering all, his heart he cheer'd;
And thus replied: 'My lady and my wife,
To your wise conduct I resign my life;
Choose you for me, for well you understand
The future good and ill on either hand:
But if an humble husband may request,
Provide and order all things for the best;
Yours be the care to profit and to please,
And let your subject servant take his ease.'
'Then thus in peace,' quoth she, 'concludes the strife,
Since I am turn'd the husband, you the wife:

The [illegible] victory is mine,
Which, having fairly gain'd, I will resign.
Forgive, if I have said or done amiss,
And seal the bargain with a friendly kiss:
I promised you but one content to share,
But now I will become both good and fair.
No nuptial quarrel shall disturb your ease;
The business of my life shall be to please:
And for my beauty, that, as time shall try;
But draw the curtain first, and cast your eye."
He look'd, and saw a creature heavenly fair,
In bloom of youth, and of a charming air:
With joy he turn'd, and seized her ivory arm,
And, like Pygmalion, found the statue warm.
Small arguments there needed to prevail;
A storm of kisses pour'd as thick as hail.
Thus long in mutual bliss they lay embraced,
And their first love continued to the last:
One sunshine was their life, no cloud between,
Nor ever was a kinder couple seen.
And so may all our lives like theirs be led:
Heaven send the maids young husbands, fresh in bed;
May widows wed as often as they can,
And ever for the better change their man;
And some devouring plague pursue their lives,
Who will not well be govern'd by their wives!

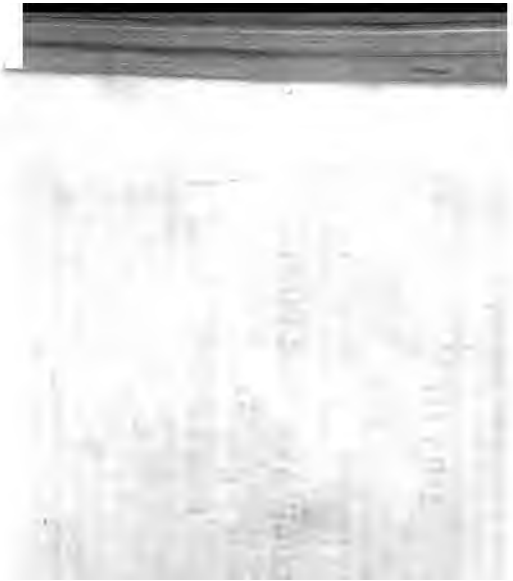
DRYDEN.

THE

COCK AND THE FOX;

AND

OTHER POEMS.



DRYDEN.

THE COCK AND THE FOX.



And starting up beheld the heavy sight,
How Reynard to the forest took his flight.

Neagle Cubbon fc


BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

DRYDEN.

THE COCK AND THE FOX;

OR,

THE TALE OF THE NUN'S PRIEST,

FROM CHAUCER.

THERE lived, as authors tell, in days of yore,
A widow somewhat old, and very poor:
Deep in a dell her cottage lonely stood,
Well thatch'd, and under covert of a wood.
This dowager, on whom my tale I found,
Since last she laid her husband in the ground,
A simple sober life in patience led,
And had but just enough to buy her bread:
But huswifing the little Heaven had lent,
She duly paid a groat for quarter-rent;
And pinch'd her belly, with her daughters two,
To bring the year about with much ado.

The cattle in her homestead were three sows,
An ewe called Mally, and three brinded cows.
Her parlour-window stuck with herbs around,
Of savoury smell; and rushes strew'd the ground.
A maple-dresser in her hall she had,
On which full many a slender meal she made:
For no delicious morsel pass'd her throat;
According to her cloth she cut her coat:
No poignant sauce she knew, nor costly treat;
Her hunger gave a relish to her meat:
A sparing diet did her health assure;
Or sick, a pepper-posset was her cure.
Before the day was done, her work she sped,
And never went by candle-light to bed:
With exercise she sweat ill-humours out;
Her dancing was not hinder'd by the gout.
Her poverty was glad, her heart content,
Nor knew she what the spleen or vapours meant.
Of wine she never tasted through the year,
But white and black was all her homely cheer;
Brown bread, and milk (but first she skimm'd her bowls),
And rashers of singed bacon on the coals.
On holidays, an egg, or two at most;
But her ambition never reach'd to roast.
A yard she had with pales enclosed about,
Some high, some low, and a dry ditch without.
Within this homestead lived, without a peer
For crowing loud, the noble Chanticleer:
So hight her cock, whose singing did surpass
The merry notes of organs at the mass.
More certain was the crowing of a cock
To number hours than is an abbey clock;

And sooner than the matin-bell was rung
He clapp'd his wings upon his roost, and sung:
For when degrees fifteen ascended right,
By sure instinct he knew 'twas one at night.
High was his comb, and coral-red withal,
In dents embattled like a castle-wall:
His bill was raven-black, and shone like jet;
Blue were his legs, and orient were his feet:
White were his nails, like silver to behold,
His body glittering like the burnish'd gold.
This gentle cock, for solace of his life,
Six misses had, beside his lawful wife:
Scandal, that spares no king, though ne'er so good,
Says they were all of his own flesh and blood;
His sisters both by sire and mother's side,
And sure their likeness show'd them near allied.
But make the worst, the monarch did no more
Than all the Ptolemies had done before:
When incest is for interest of a nation,
'Tis made no sin by holy dispensation.
Some lines have been maintain'd by this alone,
Which by their common ugliness are known.
But passing this, as from our tale apart,
Dame Partlet was the sovereign of his heart:
Ardent in love, outrageous in his play,
He feather'd her a hundred times a day;
And she, that was not only passing fair,
But was withal discreet and debonaire,
Resolved the passive doctrine to fulfil,
Though loth, and let him work his wicked will:
At board and bed was affable and kind,
According as their marriage-vow did bind,
And as the church's precept had enjoin'd.

Ev'n since she was a se'nnight old, they say,
Was chaste and humble to her dying day,
Nor chick nor hen was known to disobey.
By this her husband's heart she did obtain;
What cannot beauty, join'd with virtue, gain?
She was his only joy, and he her pride;
She, when he walk'd, went pecking by his side;
If, spurning on the ground, he sprung a corn,
The tribute in his bill to her was borne.
But O! what joy it was to hear him sing
In summer, when the day began to spring!
Stretching his neck, and warbling in his throat
Solus cum solâ, then was all his note:
For in the days of yore the birds of parts
Were bred to speak, and sing, and learn the liberal arts.
It happ'd, that perching on the parlour-beam,
Amidst his wives, he had a deadly dream
Just at the dawn; and sigh'd, and groan'd so fast,
As every breath he drew would be his last.
Dame Partlet, ever nearest to his side,
Heard all his piteous moan, and how he cried
For help from gods and men; and, sore aghast,
She peck'd and pull'd, and waken'd him at last.
'Dear heart,' said she, 'for love of heaven, declare
Your pain, and make me partner of your care.
You groan, sir, ever since the morning light,
As something had disturb'd your noble spright.'
'And, madam, well I might,' said Chanticleer,
'Never was Shrovetide cock in such a fear:
Ev'n still I run all over in a sweat,
My princely senses not recover'd yet.

For such a dream I had of dire portent,
That much I fear my body will be shent;
It bodes I shall have wars and woful strife,
Or in a loathsome dungeon end my life.
Know, dame, I dreamt within my troubled breast
That in our yard I saw a murderous beast,
That on my body would have made arrest.
With waking eyes I ne'er beheld his fellow,
His colour was betwixt a red and yellow:
Tipp'd was his tail, and both his pricking ears,
With black, and much unlike his other hairs:
The rest, in shape a beagle's whelp throughout,
With broader forehead, and a sharper snout:
Deep in his front were sunk his glowing eyes;
That yet methinks I see him with surprise.
Reach out your hand; I drop with clammy sweat;
And lay it to my heart, and feel it beat.' [above,
'Now, fie for shame!' quoth she, 'by heaven
Thou hast for ever lost thy lady's love;
No woman can endure a recreant knight;
He must be bold by day and free by night.
Our sex desires a husband, or a friend,
Who can our honour and his own defend;
Wise, hardy, secret, liberal of his purse:
A fool is nauseous, but a coward worse:
No bragging coxcomb, yet no baffled knight.
How darest thou talk of love, and darest not fight?
How darest thou tell thy dame thou art afeard?
Hast thou no manly heart, and hast a beard?
'If aught from fearful dreams may be divined,
They signify a cock of dunghill-kind.
All dreams, as in old Galen I have read,
Are from repletion and complexion bred;

Some truths are not by reason to be tried,
But we have sure experience for our guide.
An ancient author,[1] equal with the best,
Relates this tale of dreams among the rest:—

'Two friends, or brothers, with observant mind
On some far pilgrimage together went.
It happen'd so, that when the sun was down,
They just arrived by twilight at a town:
That day had been the training of a bull;
'Twas at a feast, and every inn so full,
That no void room in chamber, or no ground,
And but one scurvy bed was to be found;
And that so little it would hold but one,
Though till this hour they never lay alone.

'So were they forced to part; one stay'd behind,
His fellow sought what lodging he could find:
At last he found a stall where oxen stood,
And that he rather chose than lie abroad.
'Twas in a farther yard without a door;
But, for his ease, well litter'd was the floor.

'His fellow, who the narrow bed had kept,
Was weary, and without a rocker slept:
Supine he snored; but in the dead of night
He dreamt his friend appear'd before his sight,
Who with a ghastly look and doleful cry
Said, "Help me, brother, or this night I die!
Arise, and help, before all help be vain,
Or in an ox's stall I shall be slain!"

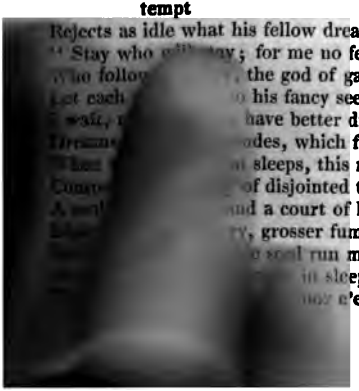
'Roused from his rest, he waken'd in a start,
Shivering with horror, and with aching heart;

[1] Cicero, in his treatise De Divinatione.

At length to cure himself by reason tries:
'Twas but a dream, and what are dreams but lies?
So thinking, changed his side, and closed his eyes.
His dream returns; his friend appears again,
"The murderers come: now help, or I am slain!"
'Twas but a vision still, and visions are but vain.
He dreamt the third: but now his friend appear'd
Pale, naked, pierced with wounds, with blood besmear'd:
"Thrice warn'd, awake!" said he, "relief is late,
The deed is done; but thou revenge my fate!
Tardy of aid, unseal thy heavy eyes;
Awake, and with the dawning day arise:
Take to the western gate thy ready way,
For by that passage they my corpse convey.
My corpse is in a tumbrel laid, among
The filth and ordure, and enclosed with dung.
That cart arrest, and raise a common cry;
For sacred hunger of my gold I die!"
Then show'd his grisly wound; and last he drew
A piteous sigh, and took a long adieu!
'The frighted friend arose by break of day,
And found the stall where late his fellow lay.
Then, of his impious host inquiring more,
Was answer'd that his guest was gone before:
"Muttering he went," said he, "by morning light,
And much complain'd of his ill rest by night."
This raised suspicion in the pilgrim's mind;
Because all hosts are of an evil kind,
And oft, to share the spoil, with robbers join'd.
'His dream confirm'd his thought: with troubled look
Straight to the western gate his way he took;

There, as his dream foretold, a cart he found,
That carried compost forth to dung the ground.
This when the pilgrim saw, he stretch'd his throat,
And cried out "Murder!" with a yelling note;
"My murder'd fellow in this cart lies dead:
Vengeance and justice on the villain's head!
You, magistrates, who sacred laws dispense,
On you I call to punish this offence!"
'The word thus given, within a little space,
The mob came roaring out, and throng'd the place.
All in a trice they cast the cart to ground,
And in the dung the murder'd body found,
Though breathless, warm, and reeking from the wound.
Good Heaven, whose darling attribute we find
Is boundless grace and mercy to mankind,
Abhors the cruel, and the deeds of night
By wondrous ways reveals in open light.
Murder may pass unpunish'd for a time,
But tardy justice will o'ertake the crime:
And oft a speedier pain the guilty feels;
The hue and cry of Heaven pursues him at the heels,
Fresh from the fact, as in the present case:
The criminals are seized upon the place,
Carter and host confronted face to face.
Stiff in denial, as the law appoints,
On engines they distend their tortured joints:
So was confession forced, the offence was known,
And public justice on the offenders done.
'Here may you see that visions are to dread;
And in the page that follows this I read
Of two young merchants, whom the hope of gain
Induced in partnership to cross the main:

Waiting till willing winds their sails supplied,
Within a trading-town they long abide,
Full fairly situate on a haven's side.
'One evening it befel, that, looking out,
The wind they long had wish'd was come about.
Well pleased they went to rest, and, if the gale
Till morn continued, both resolved to sail.
But, as together in a bed they lay,
The younger had a dream at break of day:
A man, he thought, stood frowning at his side,
Who warn'd him for his safety to provide,
Nor put to sea, but safe on shore abide.
"I come, thy genius, to command thy stay;
Trust not the winds, for fatal is the day,
And death, unhoped, attends the watery way."
'The vision said, and vanish'd from his sight.
The dreamer waken'd in a mortal fright,
Then pull'd his drowsy neighbour, and declared
What in his slumber he had seen and heard.
His friend smiled scornful, and with proud contempt



Rejects as idle what his fellow dreamt:
"Stay who will stay; for me no fears restrain,
Who follow the god of gain:
Let each his fancy seems;
wait, have better dreams!
Dreams odes, which fancy makes:
sleeps, this mimic wakes;
Courts of disjointed things,
And a court of kings.
grosser fumes are sad;
soul run mad;
in sleep we see,
e'er can be.

Sometimes, forgotten things long cast behind
Rush forward in the brain, and come to mind;
The nurse's legends are for truths received,
And the man dreams but what the boy believed
Sometimes we but rehearse a former play;
The night restores our actions done by day;
As hounds in sleep will open for their prey.
In short, the farce of dreams is of a piece,
Chimeras all, and more absurd, or less:
You, who believe in tales, abide alone;
Whate'er I get this voyage is my own."

'Thus, while he spoke, he heard the shou crew
That call'd aboard, and took his last adieu!
The vessel went before a merry gale,
And for quick passage put on every sail;
But when least fear'd, and ev'n in open day,
The mischief overtook her in the way.
Whether she sprung a leak, I cannot find,
Or whether she was overset with wind,
Or that some rock below her bottom rent,
But down at once with all her crew she went:
Her fellow ships from far her loss descried;
But only she was sunk, and all were safe besid

'By this example you are taught again
That dreams and visions are not always vain.
But if, dear Partlet, you are yet in doubt,
Another tale shall make the former out.

'Kenelm, the son of Kenulph, Mercia's king
Whose holy life the legends loudly sing,[a]
Warn'd in a dream, his murder did foretel
From point to point, as after it befel:

[a] The legends record him as a martyr. He was mur by his sister Quendreda when only seven years old.

All circumstances to his nurse he told
(A wonder, from a child of seven years old).
The dream with horror heard, the good old wife
From treason counsell'd him to guard his life;
But close to keep the secret in his mind,
For a boy's vision small belief would find.
The pious child, by promise bound, obey'd;
Nor was the fatal murder long delay'd:
By Quenda slain, he fell before his time,
Made a young martyr by his sister's crime.
The tale is told by venerable Bede,
Which, at your better leisure, you may read.
'Macrobius, too, relates the vision sent
To the great Scipio, with the famed event:
Objection makes, but after makes replies,
And adds, that dreams are often prophecies.
'Of Daniel, you may read in holy writ,
Who, when the king his vision did forget,
Could word for word the wondrous dream repeat;
Nor less of patriarch Joseph understand,
Who by a dream enslaved the Egyptian land,
The years of plenty and of dearth foretold,
When, for their bread, their liberty they sold:
Nor must the exalted butler be forgot;
Nor he whose dream presaged his hanging lot.
'And did not Crœsus the same death foresee,
Raised in a vision on a lofty tree?
The wife of Hector, in his utmost pride,
Dreamt of his death the night before he died.
Well was he warn'd from battle to refrain,
But men to death decreed are warn'd in vain:
He dared the dream, and by his fatal foe was slain.
'Much more I know, which I forbear to speak;
For see, the ruddy day begins to break:

Let this suffice, that plainly I foresee
My dream was bad, and bodes adversity;
But neither pills nor laxatives I like,
They only serve to make a well man sick:
Of these his gain the sharp physician makes,
And often gives a purge, but seldom takes:
They not correct, but poison all the blood,
And ne'er did any but the doctors good.
Their tribe, trade, trinkets, I defy them all,
With every work of 'pothecary's hall.
'These melancholy matters I forbear:
But let me tell thee, Partlet mine, and swear,
That when I view the beauties of thy face
I fear not death, nor dangers, nor disgrace:
So may my soul have bliss, as when I spy
The scarlet red about thy partridge eye,
While thou art constant to thy own true knight,
While thou art mine, and I am thy delight,
All sorrows at thy presence take their flight.
For true it is, as *in principio,*
Mulier est hominis confusio.
Madam, the meaning of this Latin is,
That woman is to man his sovereign bliss.
For when by night I feel your tender side,
Though for the narrow perch I cannot ride,
Yet I have such a solace in my mind,
That all my boding cares are cast behind;
And ev'n already I forget my dream:'—
He said, and downward flew from off the beam:
For daylight now began apace to spring,
The thrush to whistle, and the lark to sing.
Then crowing, clapp'd his wings; the appointed call
To chuck his wives together in the hall.

By this the widow had unbarr'd the door,
And Chanticleer went strutting out before,
With royal courage, and with heart so light,
As show'd he scorn'd the visions of the night.
Now roaming in the yard he spurn'd the ground,
And gave to Partlet the first grain he found;
Then often feather'd her with wanton play,
And trod her twenty times ere prime of day;
And took by turns and gave so much delight,
Her sisters pined with envy at the sight.
He chuck'd again, when other corns he found,
And scarcely deign'd to set a foot to ground;
But swagger'd like a lord about his hall,
And his seven wives came running at his call.
'Twas now the month in which the world began,
(If March beheld the first created man)
And since the vernal equinox, the sun,
In Aries twelve degrees, or more, had run;
When casting up his eyes against the light,
Both month, and day, and hour, he measured right,
And told more truly than the ephemeris;
For art may err, but nature cannot miss.
Thus numbering times and seasons in his breast,
His second crowing the third hour confess'd:
Then turning, said to Partlet, 'See, my dear,
How lavish nature has adorn'd the year;
How the pale primrose and blue violet spring,
And birds essay their throats, disused to sing:
All these are ours; and I with pleasure see
Man strutting on two legs, and aping me!
An unfledged creature, of a lumpish frame,
Endued with fewer particles of flame:
Our dame sits cowering o'er a kitchen-fire;
I draw fresh air, and nature's works admire:

And ev'n this day, in more delight abound,
Than since I was an egg I ever found.'
The time shall come when Chanticleer shall wish
His words unsaid, and hate his boasted bliss:
The crested bird shall by experience know,
Jove made not him his masterpiece below;
And learn the latter end of joy is woe.
The vessel of his bliss to dregs is run,
And Heaven will have him taste his other tun.
Ye wise, draw near, and hearken to my tale,
Which proves that oft the proud by flattery fail:
The legend is as true, I undertake,
As Tristran is, and Launcelot of the Lake;
Which all our ladies in such reverence hold,
As if in Book of Martyrs it were told.
A fox, full fraught with seeming sanctity,
That fear'd an oath, but like the devil would lie;
Who look'd like Lent, and had the holy leer,
And durst not sin before he said his prayer—
This pious cheat, that never suck'd the blood,
Nor chew'd the flesh of lambs, but when he could,
Had pass'd three summers in the neighbouring wood:
And musing long whom next to circumvent,
On Chanticleer his wicked fancy bent;
And in his high imagination cast
By stratagem to gratify his taste.
The plot contrived, before the break of day,
Saint Reynard through the hedge had made his way:
The pale was next, but proudly with a bound
He leap'd the fence of the forbidden ground:
Yet, fearing to be seen, within a bed
Of coleworts he conceal'd his wily head;

There skulk'd till afternoon, and watch'd his time
(As murderers use) to perpetrate his crime.
O hypocrite, ingenious to destroy!
O traitor, worse than Sinon was to Troy!
O vile subverter of the Gallic reign,
More false than Gano was to Charlemagne!
O Chanticleer, in an unhappy hour
Didst thou forsake the safety of thy bower!
Better for thee thou hadst believed thy dream,
And not that day descended from the beam!
But here the doctors eagerly dispute:
Some hold predestination absolute:
Some clerks maintain, that Heaven at first foresees,
And in the virtue of foresight decrees.
If this be so, then Prescience binds the will,
And mortals are not free to good or ill:
For what he first foresaw, he must ordain,
Or its eternal prescience may be vain:
As bad for us as Prescience had not been;
For first, or last, he 's author of the sin;
And who says that, let the blaspheming man
Say worse ev'n of the devil, if he can.
For how can that Eternal Power be just,
To punish man, who sins because he must?
Or how can he reward a virtuous deed,
Which is not done by us, but first decreed?
I cannot bolt this matter to the bran,
As Bradwardin[3] and holy Austin can:

3 Thomas Bradwardin was elected archbishop of Canterbury in 1348. He had the character of a great philosopher and mathematician, and was so eminent a divine as to be called *Doctor Profundus*. Austin, or Augustine, was the first archbishop of Canterbury.

If Prescience can determine actions so
That we must do, because he did foreknow;
Or that, foreknowing, yet our choice is free,
Not forced to sin by strict necessity:
This strict necessity they simple call,
Another sort there is, conditional.
The first so binds the will, that things foreknown,
By spontaneity, not choice, are done.
Thus galley-slaves tug willing at their oar;
Consent to work, in prospect of the shore;
But would not work at all, if not constrain'd before.
That other does not liberty constrain,
But man may either act, or may refrain.
Heaven made us agents free to good or ill,
And forced it not, though he foresaw the will.
Freedom was first bestow'd on human race,
And Prescience only held the second place.
If he could make such agents wholly free,
I not dispute; the point 's too high for me:
For Heaven's unfathom'd power what man can sound,
Or put to his Omnipotence a bound?
He made us to his image, all agree;
That image is the soul, and that must be
Or not the Maker's image, or be free.
But whether it were better man had been
By nature bound to good, not free to sin,
I wave, for fear of splitting on a rock.
The tale I tell is only of a cock;
Who had not run the hazard of his life,
Had he believed his dream, and not his wife:
For women, with a mischief to their kind,
Pervert, with bad advice, our better mind.

A woman's counsel brought us first to woe,
And made her man his Paradise forego,
Where at heart's ease he lived; and might have been
As free from sorrow as he was from sin.
For what the devil had their sex to do,
That, born to folly, they presumed to know,
And could not see the serpent in the grass?
But I myself presume, and let it pass.
'Silence in times of suffering is the best;
'Tis dangerous to disturb a hornet's nest.
In other authors you may find enough,
But all they say of dames is idle stuff.
Legends of lying wits together bound,
The wife of Bath would throw them to the ground.'
These are the words of Chanticleer, not mine;
I honour dames, and think their sex divine.
Now to continue what my tale begun:—
Lay madam Partlet basking in the sun,
Breast-high in sand: her sisters in a row,
Enjoy'd the beams above, the warmth below.
The cock, that of his flesh was ever free,
Sang merrier than the mermaid in the sea;
And so befel, that as he cast his eye,
Among the coleworts on a butterfly,
He saw false Reynard, where he lay full low;
I need not swear he had no list to crow:
But cried, 'Cock, Cock!' and gave a sudden start,
As sore dismay'd and frighted at his heart.
For birds and beasts, inform'd by nature, know
Kinds opposite to theirs, and fly their foe:
So Chanticleer, who never saw a fox,
Yet shunn'd him as a sailor shuns the rocks.
But the false loon, who could not work his will,
By open force, employ'd his flattering skill.

'I hope, my lord,' said he, 'I not offend.
Are you afraid of me, that am your friend?
I were a beast indeed to do you wrong—
I, who have loved and honour'd you so long:
Stay, gentle sir, nor take a false alarm,
For, on my soul, I never meant you harm.
I come no spy, nor as a traitor press
To learn the secrets of your soft recess:
Far be from Reynard so profane a thought,
But by the sweetness of your voice was brought:
For, as I bid my beads, by chance I heard
The song as of an angel in the yard;
A song that would have charm'd the infernal gods,
And banish'd horror from the dark abodes:
Had Orpheus sung it in the nether sphere,
So much the hymn had pleased the tyrant's ear,
The wife had been detain'd, to keep the husband there.
'My lord, your sire familiarly I knew,
A peer deserving such a son as you:
He, with your lady-mother, (whom Heaven rest!)
Has often graced my house, and been my guest.
To view his living features does me good,
For I am your poor neighbour in the wood,
And in my cottage should be proud to see
The worthy heir of my friend's family.
'But since I speak of singing, let me say,
As with an upright heart I safely may,
That, save yourself, there breathes not on the ground,
One like your father for a silver sound.
So sweetly would he wake the winter day,
That matrons to the church mistook their way,
And thought they heard the merry organ play.

And he to raise his voice with artful care,
(What will not beaux attempt to please the fair?)
On tiptoe stood to sing with greater strength,
And stretch'd his comely neck at all the length;
And while he strain'd his voice to pierce the skies,
As saints in raptures use, would shut his eyes,
That the sound striving through the narrow throat,
His winking might avail to mend the note.
By this, in song, he never had his peer,
From sweet Cecilia down to Chanticleer;
Not Maro's muse, who sung the 'mighty man,'
Nor Pindar's heavenly lyre, nor Horace when a swan.
Your ancestors proceed from race divine:
From Brennus and Belinus is your line,
Who gave to sovereign Rome such loud alarms,
That ev'n the priests were not excused from arms.
'Besides, a famous monk[4] of modern times,
Has left of cocks recorded in his rhymes,
That of a parish-priest the son and heir,
(When sons of priests were from the proverb clear)
Affronted once a cock of noble kind,
And either lamed his legs, or struck him blind;
For which the clerk his father was disgraced,
And in his benefice another placed.
Now sing, my lord, if not for love of me,
Yet for the sake of sweet saint Charity;
Make hills and dales, and earth and heaven rejoice,
And emulate your father's angel voice.'
The cock was pleased to hear him speak so fair,
And proud beside, as solar people are;

[4] Nigellus Wireker, in *Speculum Stultorum*.

Nor could the treason from the truth descry,
So was he ravish'd with this flattery:
So much the more, as from a little elf
He had a high opinion of himself:
Though sickly, slender, and not large of limb,
Concluding all the world was made for him.
Ye princes, raised by poets to the gods,
And Alexander'd up in lying odes,
Believe not every flattering knave's report:
There 's many a Reynard lurking in the court;
And he shall be received with more regard,
And listen'd to, than modest truth is heard.
This Chanticleer, of whom the story sings,
Stood high upon his toes, and clapp'd his wings;
Then stretch'd his neck, and wink'd with both his eyes,
Ambitious, as he sought the Olympic prize;
But while he pain'd himself to raise his note,
False Reynard rush'd, and caught him by the throat:
Then on his back he laid the precious load,
And sought his wonted shelter of the wood;
Swiftly he made his way, the mischief done,
Of all unheeded, and pursued by none.
Alas! what stay is there in human state,
Or who can shun inevitable fate?
The doom was written, the decree was past,
Ere the foundations of the world were cast!
In Aries though the sun exalted stood,
His patron-planet to procure his good;
Yet Saturn was his mortal foe, and he
In Libra raised, opposed the same degree:
The rays both good and bad, of equal power,
Each thwarting other, made a mingled hour.

On Friday morn he dreamt this direful dream,
Cross to the worthy native, in his scheme!
Ah, blissful Venus, goddess of delight,
How couldst thou suffer thy devoted knight
On thy own day to fall by foe oppress'd,
The wight of all the world who served thee best?
Who, true to love, was all for recreation,
And minded not the work of propagation.
Gaufride,[5] who couldst so well in rhyme complain
The death of Richard, with an arrow slain;
Why had not I thy muse, or thou my heart,
To sing this heavy dirge with equal art!
That I like thee of Friday might complain;
For on that day was Cœur de Lion slain.
Not louder cries, when Ilium was in flames,
Were sent to heaven by woful Trojan dames,
When Pyrrhus toss'd on high his burnish'd blade,
And offer'd Priam to his father's shade,
Than for the cock the widow'd poultry made.
Fair Partlet first, when he was borne from sight,
With sovereign shrieks bewail'd her captive knight,
Far louder than the Carthaginian wife,
When Asdrubal, her husband, lost his life;
When she beheld the smouldering flames ascend,
And all the Punic glories at an end:
Willing into the fires she plunged her head
With greater ease than others seek their bed.
Not more aghast the matrons of renown,
When tyrant Nero burn'd the imperial town,
Shriek'd for the downfal in a doleful cry,
For which their guiltless lords were doom'd to die.

5 Or Geoffrey de Vinsauf, a Norman historian.

Now to my story I return again:
The trembling widow, and her daughters twain,
This woful cackling cry with horror heard,
Of those distracted damsels in the yard;
And starting up, beheld the heavy sight,
How Reynard to the forest took his flight,
And cross his back, as in triumphant scorn,
The hope and pillar of the house was borne.
'The fox, the wicked fox!' was all the cry;
Out from his house ran every neighbour nigh:
The vicar first, and after him the crew,
With forks and staves the felon to pursue.
Ran Coll our dog, and Talbot with the band,
And Malkin, with her distaff in her hand;
Ran cow and calf, and family of hogs,
In panic horror of pursuing dogs,
With many a deadly grunt and doleful squeak,
Poor swine! as if their pretty hearts would break.
The shouts of men, the women in dismay,
With shrieks augment the terror of the day.
The ducks that heard the proclamation cried,
And fear'd a persecution might betide,
Full twenty miles from town their voyage take,
Obscure in rushes of the liquid lake.
The geese fly o'er the barn; the bees, in arms,
Drive headlong from the waxen cells in swarms.
Jack Straw at London-stone, with all his rout,
Struck not the city with so loud a shout;
Not when with English hate they did pursue
A Frenchman, or an unbelieving Jew:
Not when the welkin rang with 'one and all;'
And echoes bounded back from Fox's hall;
Earth seem'd to sink beneath, and heaven above to fall!

With might and main they chased the murderous fox,
With brazen trumpets, and inflated box,
To kindle Mars with military sounds;
Nor wanted horns to inspire sagacious hounds.
But see how Fortune can confound the wise,
And, when they least expect it, turn the dice.
The captive cock, who scarce could draw his breath,
And lay within the very jaws of death;
Yet in this agony his fancy wrought,
And fear supplied him with this happy thought:
'Yours is the prize, victorious prince!' said he;
'The vicar my defeat, and all the village see.
Enjoy your friendly fortune while you may,
And bid the churls, that envy you the prey,
Call back their mongrel curs, and cease their cry;
See, fools, the shelter of the wood is nigh,
And Chanticleer in your despite shall die:
He shall be pluck'd, and eaten to the bone.'
'Tis well advised; in faith, it shall be done!'
This Reynard said: but as the word he spoke,
The prisoner with a spring from prison broke:
Then stretch'd his feather'd fans with all his might,
And to the neighbouring maple wing'd his flight;
Whom when the traitor safe on tree beheld,
He cursed the gods, with shame and sorrow fill'd;
Shame for his folly, sorrow out of time,
For plotting an unprofitable crime:
Yet mastering both, the artificer of lies
Renews the assault, and his last battery tries.
'Though I,' said he, 'did ne'er in thought offend,
How justly may my lord suspect his friend!
The appearance is against me, I confess,
Who seemingly have put you in distress:

You, if your goodness does not plead my cause,
May think I broke all hospitable laws,
To bear you from your palace-yard by might,
And put your noble person in a fright:
This, since you take it ill, I must repent,
Though Heaven can witness, with no bad intent;
I practised it, to make you taste your cheer
With double pleasure, first prepared by fear.
So loyal subjects often seize their prince,
Forced, for his good, to seeming violence,
Yet mean his sacred person not the least offence.
Descend; so help me Jove! as you shall find
That Reynard comes of no dissembling kind.'
'Nay,' quoth the cock, 'but I, beshrew us both,
If I believe a saint upon his oath:
An honest man may take a knave's advice,
But idiots only may be cozen'd twice.
Once warn'd is well bewared: not flattering lies
Shall soothe me more to sing with winking eyes,
And open mouth, for fear of catching flies.
Who blindfold walks upon a river's brim,
When he should see, has he deserved to swim?'
'Better, sir cock, let all contention cease;
Come down,' said Reynard, 'let us treat of peace.'
'A peace, with all my soul,' said Chanticleer;
'But, with your favour, I will treat it here:
And lest the truce with treason should be mix'd,
'Tis my concern to have the tree betwixt.'

THE MORAL.

In this plain fable you the effect may see
Of negligence and fond credulity;

And learn, besides, of flatterers to beware;
Then most pernicious when they speak too fair.
The cock and fox, the fool and knave imply;
The truth is moral, though the tale a lie.
Who spoke in parables, I dare not say;
But sure he knew it was a pleasing way,
Sound sense by plain example to convey:
And in a heathen author we may find,
That pleasure with instruction should be join'd:
So take the corn, and leave the chaff behind.

THE

CHARACTER OF A GOOD PARSON.

IMITATED FROM CHAUCER, AND ENLARGED.

A PARISH priest was of the pilgrim train;
An awful, reverend, and religious man.
His eyes diffused a venerable grace,
And charity itself was in his face.
Rich was his soul, though his attire was poor;
(As God had clothed his own ambassador)
For such, on earth, his bless'd Redeemer bore.
Of sixty years he seem'd; and well might last
To sixty more, but that he lived too fast;
Refined himself to soul to curb the sense,
And made almost a sin of abstinence.
Yet had his aspect nothing of severe,
But such a face as promised him sincere:
Nothing reserved or sullen was to see,
But sweet regards, and pleasing sanctity;
Mild was his accent, and his action free.
With eloquence innate his tongue was arm'd;
Though harsh the precept, yet the preacher charm'd.
For, letting down the golden chain from high,
He drew his audience upward to the sky:
And oft with holy hymns he charm'd their ears,
A music more melodious than the spheres:
For David left him, when he went to rest,
His lyre; and, after him, he sang the best.

He bore his great commission in his look,
But sweetly temper'd awe, and soften'd all he spoke.
He preach'd the joys of heaven, and pains of hell,
And warn'd the sinner with becoming zeal;
But on eternal mercy loved to dwell.
He taught the Gospel rather than the law,
And forced himself to drive, but loved to draw.
For fear but freezes minds; but love, like heat,
Exhales the soul sublime to seek her native seat.
To threats the stubborn sinner oft is hard,
Wrapp'd in his crimes, against the storm prepared;
But when the milder beams of mercy play,
He melts, and throws his cumbrous cloak away.
Lightning and thunder (Heaven's artillery)
As harbingers before the Almighty fly:
Those but proclaim his style, and disappear;
The stiller sound succeeds, and God is there!
The tithes his parish freely paid, he took,
But never sued, or cursed with bell and book;
With patience bearing wrong, but offering none,
Since every man is free to lose his own.
The country churls, according to their kind,
(Who grudge their dues, and love to be behind)
The less he sought his offerings, pinch'd the more;
And praised a priest contented to be poor.
Yet of his little he had some to spare,
To feed the famish'd, and to clothe the bare:
For mortified he was to that degree,
A poorer than himself he would not see.
'True priests,' he said, 'and preachers of the Word,
Were only stewards of their Sovereign Lord:
Nothing was theirs; but all the public store,
Intrusted riches, to relieve the poor;

Who, should they steal, for want of his relief,
He judged himself accomplice with the thief.'
Wide was his parish; not contracted close
In streets, but here and there a straggling house;
Yet still he was at hand, without request,
To serve the sick, to succour the distress'd;
Tempting, on foot, alone, without affright,
The dangers of a dark tempestuous night.
All this the good old man perform'd alone,
Nor spared his pains; for curate he had none:
Nor durst he trust another with his care;
Nor rode himself to Paul's, the public fair,
To chaffer for preferment with his gold,
Where bishopricks and sinecures are sold:
But duly watch'd his flock by night and day,
And from the prowling wolf redeem'd the prey,
And hungry sent the wily fox away.
The proud he tamed, the penitent he cheer'd,
Nor to rebuke the rich offender fear'd.
His preaching much, but more his practice wrought:
(A living sermon of the truths he taught)
For this by rules severe his life he squared,
That all might see the doctrine which they heard:
'For priests,' he said, 'are patterns for the rest:
(The gold of heaven, who bear the God impress'd)
But when the precious coin is kept unclean,
The Sovereign's image is no longer seen.
If they be foul, on whom the people trust,
Well may the baser brass contract a rust.'
The prelate for his holy life he prized;
The worldly pomp of prelacy despised.
His Saviour came not with a gaudy show,
Nor was his kingdom of the world below.

Patience in want, and poverty of mind—
These marks of church and churchmen he design'd,
And living taught, and dying left behind.
The crown he wore was of the pointed thorn;
In purple he was crucified, not born.
They who contend for place and high degree,
Are not his sons, but those of Zebedee.
Not but he knew the signs of earthly power
Might well become saint Peter's successor:
The holy father holds a double reign;
The prince may keep his pomp—the fisher must be plain.
Such was the saint, who shone with every grace,
Reflecting, Moses-like, his Maker's face.
God saw his image lively was express'd,
And his own work, as in creation, bless'd.
The tempter saw him, too, with envious eye,
And, as on Job, demanded leave to try.
He took the time when Richard was deposed,
And high and low with happy Harry closed.
This prince, though great in arms, the priest withstood:
Near though he was, yet not the next of blood,
Had Richard unconstrain'd resign'd the throne:
A king can give no more than is his own;
The title stood entail'd, had Richard had a son.
Conquest, an odious name, was laid aside;
Where all submitted, none the battle tried.
The senseless plea of right by Providence,
Was, by a flattering priest, invented since,
And lasts no longer than the present sway,
But justifies the next who comes in play.
The people's right remains; let those who dare,
Dispute their power, when they the judges are.

He join'd not in their choice, because he knew
Worse might, and often did, from change ensue;
Much to himself he thought, but little spoke,
And, undeprived, his benefice forsook.
Now, through the land, his cure of souls he stretch'd,
And like a primitive apostle preach'd:
Still cheerful, ever constant to his call;
By many follow'd, loved by most, admired by all.
With what he begg'd, his brethren he relieved,
And gave the charities himself received:
Gave, while he taught, and edified the more,
Because he show'd by proof, 'twas easy to be poor.
He went not with the crowd to see a shrine;
But fed us by the way with food divine.
In deference to his virtues, I forbear
To show you what the rest in orders were:
This brilliant is so spotless, and so bright,
He needs no foil, but shines by his own proper light.

VENI CREATOR SPIRITUS

PARAPHRASED.

CREATOR Spirit! by whose aid
The world's foundations first were laid,
Come visit every pious mind;
Come pour thy joys on human kind;
From sin and sorrow set us free,
And make thy temples worthy thee!
O Source of uncreated light,
The Father's promised Paraclete!
Thrice Holy Fount, thrice Holy Fire,
Our hearts with heavenly love inspire;
Come, and thy sacred unction bring
To sanctify us, while we sing.
Plenteous of grace, descend from high,
Rich in thy sevenfold energy!
Thou strength of his Almighty hand,
Whose power does heaven and earth command!
Proceeding Spirit, our defence,
Who dost the gift of tongues dispense,
And crown'st thy gift with eloquence!
Refine and purge our earthly parts;
But, O, inflame and fire our hearts!
Our frailties help, our vice control,
Submit the senses to the soul;
And when rebellious they are grown,
Then lay thy hand, and hold them down.
Chase from our minds the infernal foe,
And peace the fruit of love bestow;

And, lest our feet should step astray,
Protect, and guide us in the way.
Make us eternal truths receive,
And practise all that we believe:
Give us thyself, that we may see
The Father, and the Son, by thee.
Immortal honour, endless fame,
Attend the Almighty-Father's name!
The Saviour-Son be glorified,
Who for lost man's redemption died;
And equal adoration be,
Eternal Paraclete, to thee!





